



*The*  
BOY SCOUTS  
*of the*  
WOLF PATROL



BREWER CORCORAN





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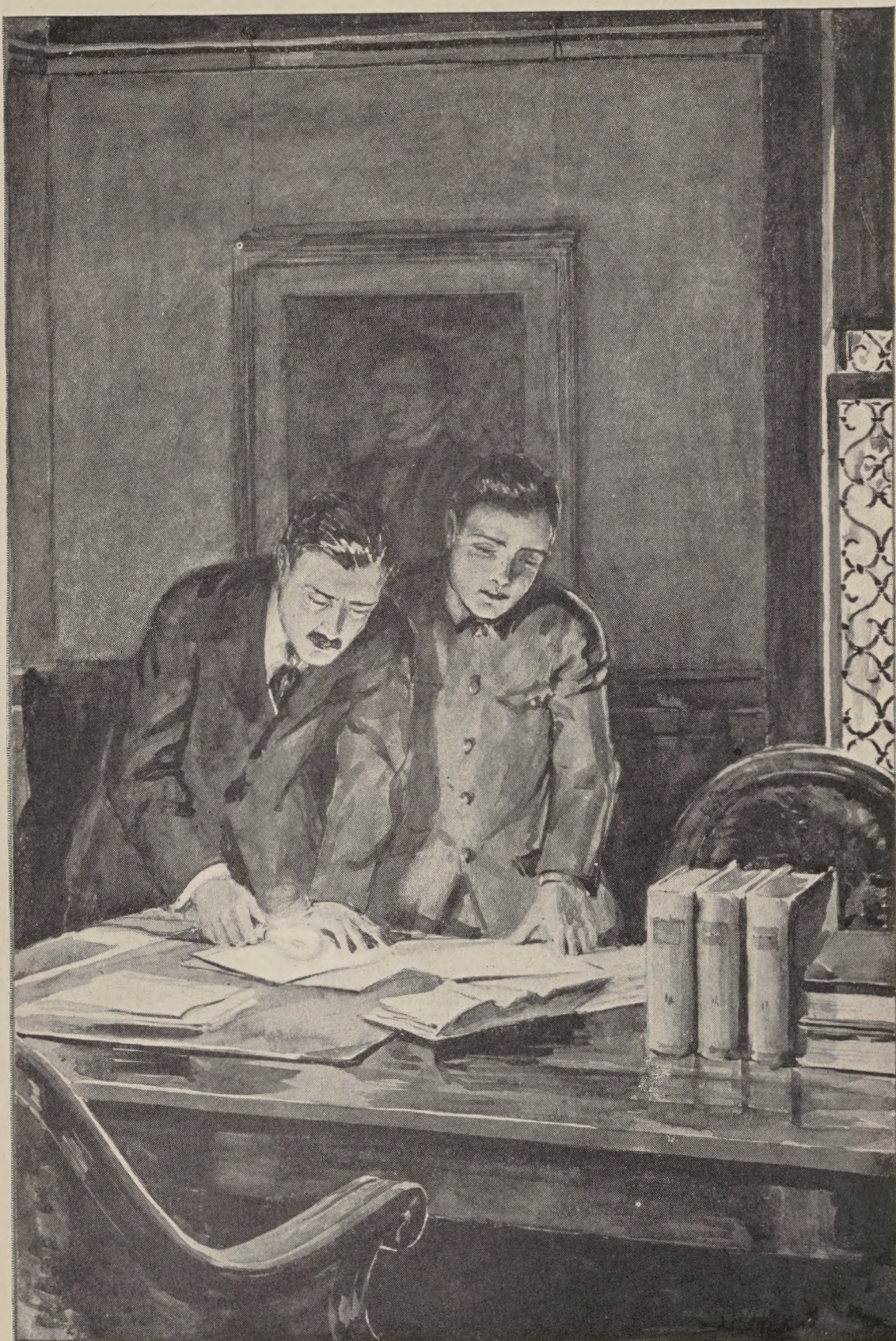






THE BOY SCOUTS  
OF THE WOLF PATROL





“IT WAS SLOW WORK, BUT SUCCESSFUL” (See page 259)



# The Boy Scouts

*of The*

## Wolf Patrol

By  
**BREWER CORCORAN**

Author of  
"The Boy Scouts of Kendallville," "Will Bradford's School Days, or The Barbarian,"  
"The Road to Le Rêve," etc.

Illustrated by  
**JOHN GOSS** ✓



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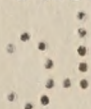


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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

To such of my readers as are Boy Scouts no explanation is needed of the difference between a Boy Scout troop and a patrol, but to those who are not members of this wonderful organization, it may be desirable to explain that a patrol is a group of not more than nine boys, from whom one is selected as the patrol leader, while a troop is a larger organization and made up of several patrols. A patrol assumes a distinct name, usually that of an animal, such as the Wolf Patrol about which this story is written, while the troops are known by their locality, and if there is more than one troop in any locality each troop is given a number.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation of the courtesy of Mr. Franklin Mathiews, Director of the Library Department of "Boys' Life," the official magazine of the Boy Scouts of America, to whom the manuscript of this story was submitted, and who has given it his official approval.

BREWER CORCORAN.

Mr. G. M. V. 6-20.







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# THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE WOLF PATROL

## CHAPTER I

### THE WOLVES GATHER

SPRING, having come to Gillfield, lingered, and Tug Wilson's dog Hector observed this annual event by again almost catching a woodchuck. At least Tug was so insisting.

"Nothing doing!" declared Nelson Pease, disgustedly. "Nothin' doin' a-tall! In the first place, that flea hospital is afraid of a chuck, and, in the second, he wouldn't know one if he saw one."

"Would too," contradicted the loyal owner, "an' Hec'd have got him, too, if they'd had ten yards more to run."

"That may be true, Nelse," volunteered Stan Wood, joyously. "Maybe both Hec and the chuck



would have died of old age before they'd have covered that much ground."

"Never thought of that," Nelse admitted, and ventured a speculative glance at the almost-Airedale sitting on the edge of the walk before the steps. Hector, the permanent shadow of the rising generation of Wilson, wagged his stump of a tail and elevated one yellow ear. The boys having talked for almost five minutes without any display of physical activity, he felt that something was about due to happen. When such things did, he found it quite satisfactory to stick his cold nose into the neck of the lad at the bottom of the pile and then to capture some stray cap and worry it for ten minutes or so. Hec was hopeful in other things than the pursuit of woodchucks. His only minor drawbacks were his reputation and his name. He had earned the former — none denied that — but the latter had been bestowed on him by Tug's mother, which goes to prove that few women understand boys and still fewer, dogs. Hector of Troy was a perfectly good warrior, but he did converse terrifically before he



went into action. Hector of Gillfield might have been better named Battling Mike. Next to Nelse Pease, he knew more about trouble than any one in the town.

But the strange part of Hector's whole battle-scarred career was his utter and complete loyalty to Tug. Tug was everything his yellow dog was not. Gentle, quiet, lovable, the little fellow hadn't an enemy in the world. Therefore the boys who loved him most picked upon him all the time, just as the dogs gave the yellow bunch of bone and courage a wide and peaceful berth. Without Tug and Hec, the Wolf Patrol would have been lost. Each, in his own way, played the part of safety-valve.

Nor was this same Wolf Patrol, now in the process of foregathering on the Mayhew steps, a thing lightly to be passed over. The pioneer of Gillfield's Boy Scout organizations, it had thrived and prospered as only loyalty and success can make things thrive and prosper. Stephen Mayhew, after he had come back to Gillfield from college, had been quick to grasp all that the then-budding Scout



movement promised for boys, and hardly had he become established at the new desk in the office of his father's plant, which served to keep Gillfield prominently on the map, before he reached out for new fields to try his hands upon. Now he believed that these fields, populated by many youngsters, had returned him a better harvest than the factory. And when one looks over Gillfield, its neat houses, its prosperous streets, its row upon row of red brick factories, all dominated by the great Mayhew home high on the eastern side of the narrow valley, it is easy to understand the sort of chap Steve Mayhew was.

The boys of his own day and generation had loved him, but those of Tug's, Stan's, Nelson's and Joe Lowell's, looked up to him in undisguised idolatry. If he had announced that the moon was edible, even the dog Hector would have licked his chops. So, when, five years before, he had sent for eight of the boys he had watched from baby-carriages through hoops, hop-Scotch and up through marbles to long trousers, they had answered that



call even unto Alex Cotton, the Silent. And while they then had had no idea of, and less interest in, Scouting, they had agreed instantly, individually and intensely, to become tenderfeet. If "Mr. Steve" said it was a good thing, that was enough.

Since that day the Boy Scouts of Gillfield had grown, prospered and thrived, but to the eight there was but one patrol. Like true wolves, the Wolves howled alone. That is, the Wolf Patrol as a pack. They were seldom apart, they guarded their honor and reputation with a vigilance which had, on occasions, led to black eyes and remorse. For, after all, they were just human boys — these fellows of the Wolf Patrol, and that was the sort of boy Steve Mayhew wanted each to be. The lad who stands upright, looks every other boy squarely in the eye and takes his knocks as they come, has fewer grievous surprises in store in after life than the pampered mollicoddle.

Perhaps Nick Reed's classic description of the Wolves best set them forth. Nick, being then



thirteen, and as conscious of the size of his hands and brilliancy of his new red and yellow necktie as he was unconscious of his pug nose and epidemic of freckles, had cleared his throat twice, had pulled up his belt, had saluted and had addressed Scout Master Mayhew. "Beg pardon, sir," he had begun uncomfortably, "but we fellows sorter know each other an' — an' — an', we sorter hitch."

They did; there is no disputing that. They "hitched" to perfection and they played the game as a team. Up through the grammar school and into the high they came, united and indivisible. Their ranks were full and they kept them full. Many there were who wished to join the Wolves; many applied but none were chosen. From that first meeting in Mr. Steve's office through the five succeeding years there had been no vacant place. Even Hec adorned the door mat when the Patrol was in formal session.

However, to-day there was no formal meeting. Nothing can be formal when the spring sun makes both a coat on a boy and the red sheaf on a maple



bud uncomfortable. Hector abruptly ceased investigating the root of his left ear with his hind paw, and, cocking his head, glanced expectantly down the winding driveway. The soft purr of the motor grew louder. The crunch of the tires on the gravel became audible, then the long runabout swung around the curve and came to a stop before the steps. "Hello, fellows! Mail kept me longer than I expected."

The man behind the wheel jumped out. Tall, broad of shoulder, thin of waist and lean of flank, Stephen Mayhew looked the pink of condition he was. His face was better than handsome; it was strong, attractive, and its most attractive feature were the brown eyes which danced and twinkled and the straight lips which knew so well how to change from firmness into cheery smile which could grow to boyish laughter. At twenty-six he was more than his father's good right hand. There was none at lathe or drill or desk who worked at higher pressure and there was none who seemingly played with a lighter heart. Hec, thoroughly approving,



proceeded to run around in circles and attempt to bark his head off.

" 'Sall right, old man," laughed Mayhew; " I saw you before. You, Fat," he snapped, flashing around on the large, comfortable youth who still sat in the car, " wake up and get out of that! "

" Can't," replied the lad mournfully; " I'm very, very sick. I'll have to ride in this all the way. I like automobiles."

" Throw him out, Joe." Mayhew looked as young as any of them as he spoke to the well-built fellow already half way out of the rumble.

" Cheese it! " protested the victim. " I've got an earache."

" You mean you're going to have." Joe Lowell always kept his promises, but this time his fingers slipped. The next minute he and Fatty Foster were rolling on the grass and Hec was beginning to believe life worth living.

" Call off that fish hound! " wailed Fatty. " I think he bit me. Quit it, Joe! "

" Will you behave? "



The big fellow sat up, rubbing his uninjured ears with mock tenderness, his blue eyes wide with innocence. "I never do anything else," he confessed blandly. "Did you bring lunch enough for us both, Joey?"

The two joined in the general roar of laughter. While the Wolves might be a close corporation, they were as the poles apart as compared with Joe Lowell and Harvey Foster. From the time they toddled, the two had been inseparable. If Joe was not down at the foreman's house under the hill, Harvey was up at the superintendent's home adjoining the Mayhew place and, if one was not at the other's, they were, naturally, somewhere else, but together — always together.

As unlike as two boys could be, they complemented each other. Joe was as slender and high-strung as Harvey was round and placid. The former was rather quiet, thoughtful and studious; the latter bubbling over, lazy, careless, carefree, physically powerful and always and vociferously hungry. That the parents of one were well-to-do and those



of the other in decidedly moderate circumstances never occurred to either lad. If one of them had something, it always belonged to the other. If Harvey's conscience sometimes grew too acute over his scholastic standing, it was Joe who explained and re-explained problem or Latin construction. If, as once did happen, a new boy in the town tried to bully Joe, it was Harvey who completed the disaster. Perhaps it could all be summed up in fewer words — they were real friends.

“Where are Ned and Alex?” Mr. Mayhew plainly showed surprise over the absence of two of his flock.

“Probably playing catch on the way up,” volunteered Nick. “Alex's tryin' to get his arm in shape to pitch against Kendallville next week.”

“Oh, all right! They ought to be here by the time I can change to comfortable clothes. I'll be right back.” He ran up the steps and into the house, whistling as he disappeared. Somehow or other Mr. Steve seemed even more cheerful than



usual this morning. Everything pointed toward its being a big day.

He was back, clad in knickerbockers and a sweater, before the two tardy Wolves had caught their slow way the length of the drive.

"You're going to lose about three fingers some day, Ned," he called. "Cup your hands on those fast ones."

"His little sister taught him baseball," observed Nelse languidly. "Don't waste your time trying to coach him, Mr. Steve."

Field waved his gloved paw. "Alex's beginning to make 'em hop," he called, in honest delight.

"You keep talking to him that way and he'll pitch his arm to death," offered Mayhew soberly. "Too early in the season for the fast ones, Alex. Cut it out."

"Honestly, sir, arm's feeling fine."

"Good enough! Keep it feeling that way. You fellows all ready?" Once more he looked around at the boys about him.

"Yes, sir."



" Been so."

" Who's got my lunch? "

" Do I sit on the front seat again? "

" You do not. You walk, and you walk fast, Fat. This is going to be one of those days when you work."

Harvey gazed longingly at the luxurious runabout. " Every day is just like yesterday," he groaned. " To-morrow's always the day I ride. And to-morrow's never caught up with me yet. Good-by, little automobubble; you'll be lonesome, too. But keep a stiff upper lip." He swung the straps of a big knapsack over his head and made a grab for Lowell's smaller bundle. " I'll carry that, Joe," he offered; " you've got the ax."

" Which way do we go, sir? " It was most unusual for Cotton to show interest in anything but baseball.

" Thought we might cut across the farm and follow the brook up the mountain."

" Whew! " whistled Nelse. " Some hike for this time of year! "



## OF THE WOLF PATROL 13

"Got to get hardened," Mr. Mayhew retorted. There was something about both his tone and queer little smile which made Joe Lowell look at him a bit more closely.

"You've never asked us to do anything you haven't been ready to do yourself," he said. "Ready when you are, sir."

"Hike!" They swung around the southern corner of the house, a compact body, Hec yelping raspingly as he acted as the advanced line of skirmishers, and, hoping in his heart of hearts, to flush his old enemy, the Mayhew cat.

Cotton and Foster, the former because he was wise and the latter because he was lazy, set the pace. Across the gardens and over the first flat fields the going was easy, but Alex remembered of old that stiff climb up the mountain and appreciated the value of beginning it fairly fresh in strength and wind. Behind them, the other six kept up a running fire of questions at Mr. Mayhew, who gave as good as he received and proved himself a rare Scout Master by his ability to be one of the boys, yet, in some



really subtle way, keeping himself just in the background.

While he told himself over and over that he had no favorite amongst the eight, he was far from unhappy when Joe Lowell finally fell into step at his side. Tug ran ahead to see if the valiant Hec had actually treed a desperate gray squirrel.

There was a something about Joe which appealed to older men. If Steve Mayhew had been asked to define it, he would only have laughed and have said that the youngster "was a likable kid." Two characteristics stood out above all Joe's other qualities — one was his ability to listen intelligently and the other was to keep a tight tongue between his teeth. A boy can go a long way with these two gifts.

The end of the first hour found the boys in an open space about half way up the rugged mountain. Foster, one eye on the red face of little Tug, unslung his knapsack and festooned himself over a particularly uncomfortable boulder. "Here's where I rearrange my burden," he announced. "It's easier



to carry food inside than outside. Besides, I'm hungry."

"Were you ever anything else?" laughed Mayhew, as he stopped beside him.

"Oh, yes," Fat instantly agreed; "quite often I'm sleepy. What's the use in going any further, anyway? I read something somewhere sometime about a guy who tried to walk to the top of a mountain and all he got out of it was fame for freezing to death 'mid snow and ice.' I'm not ambitious. My motto's 'Play it safe.' Who'll swop two hard-boiled eggs for a jelly sandwich?"

"But you get such a bully view from the top," suggested Wood.

"You can't eat a view," Harvey retorted witheringly.

"If you could, you'd know," stated Joe. "What sort of a nine's Kendallville got this year, Alex?"

"Good." The lanky pitcher shook his head dubiously. "Good," he repeated.

"Be careful or you'll talk yourself to death," warned Nelson Pease, shifting his pack on his



shoulders. "Did you ever look on the hopeful side of anything, Alex?"

"'Tis good," reiterated the big fellow.

"You can beat 'em." Joe's voice was strong in its conviction. "You always have. They can't lick you."

"Arm's not right." Cotton's tone was mournful in the extreme.

Ned Field exhibited a puffy palm. "That doesn't look so," he proclaimed. "You nearly burned all the hide off, you old croaker! Joe's right, as usual. What you need more than more speed is a little confidence."

"What he needs more than anything else," announced Foster, "is something between his ears besides bone. If you're planning to pick all the burrs out of the fish hound, Tug, you're able to do something worth while. Come on!" Fat sprang to his feet, grabbed his hat and was half way across the clearing before the rest could pick up their things.

"Edge toward the south, Harvey," Mr. Steve



called after him. "Thought we'd build our fire by the big spring."

Foster waved his hand but did not look back. "That's where I'm headed," he answered. "I haven't forgotten last fall."

Nor had he forgotten many another afternoon spent by the source of that mountain brook. From the earliest days of the Wolves, this spring had been the favorite goal for many a hike. In fact it had become a part of the Patrol's traditions. It was there that Stephen Mayhew had taught them the woodcraft he had learned in the North and West; it was there they had listened to his quiet talks on the things which a true Scout must practice; it was there they had grown closer together in the great brotherhood of Nature.

The last ten minutes of the second hour's real climb became almost a race. Pease, by a final sprint, reached the spring just as Hec was preparing to lie down in its cooling, silver bosom. "Get out of that!" he bawled.

"He's thirsty," claimed his proud owner.



"So 'm I," snapped Nelse. "Every time I've tried to get a drink for the last two hours I've seen that hound sitting in the brook just above me. Wonder you wouldn't give him a bath at home!"

Tug, being really tired, flushed, but, in the next instant, began to laugh. Even if he was the smallest of them all, he had learned much from Scouting. "You an' Hec both make a pile of noise," he announced, "an' you both make most when there's work to do."

"You take care of the pup," chuckled Mr. Mayhew, "and I'll keep a general oversight on Nelse."

"And here," wailed Pease, "is where I do all the work as usual." Nevertheless, he was almost the first to drop his bundle. "Alex and I will get the wood," he volunteered. "Who's going to polish the kitchen range?"

"Our job," announced Ned Field. "Come on, Stan. You dig the leaves away from the old back log and I'll fix the crane."

"Hold on a minute." Joe Lowell's voice rose above the confusion of a quick start. "Everybody



pile his lunch on the rock and Tug and I'll arrange it. The rest of you slick up the place. Might as well get the dead stuff out of the way, then we won't have to bother with it again this year."

"The rest of us being Nick and me," grinned Fat, "we will now proceed to organize Troop Number 23 of the United Order of Little Robin Redbreasts. I'll sing while you pick up dead leaves to cover me with, Nick. Hop, you merry song-bird!" He grabbed a dead branch and began a wild chase after Reed, in which Hec immediately and enthusiastically joined. In two seconds they had the entire crowd dodging and yelling like wild Indians.

It was Foster who brought the game to an end as quickly as he had started it. "Stop!" he roared. "This is just making me hungrier. Everybody get busy!"

From a rollicking, shouting mass, the eight changed to workmen almost on the instant. It was easy to see that they were well grounded in their details. Alex and Nelse had a fire crackling before



Lowell and Tug had half sorted the luncheon bundles. Foster and Nick piled the winter's waste by the flames, where Mr. Mayhew could feed it judiciously into the fire, and the clang of Stan's hatchet rang above the other noises as he drove the forked uprights into the ground and then nodded to Field to swing the coffee pot into place on the cross piece.

Larger and fresh-split chunks of wood began to appear as Alex chopped at a windfall at the edge of the glade. There was no confusion, no waste motion, no hurry. Stephen Mayhew, seated on a weatherbeaten log by the fire, half nodded, as if venturing to tell himself that his work had been well done.

But again that strange look crept into his eyes and he was quieter than usual during all the clatter of the season's first meal in the open. Again Joe Lowell was the only one to notice that the Scout Master had less to say than usual. But again he kept his peace. If Mr. Steve had anything important on his mind, which he thought they should



know, he would tell them in his own good time. Joe knew that, as well as when not to ask needless or embarrassing questions.

The explanation came, as many other things had come to Gillfield, and the whole country, during the year that had gone — quietly, soberly but leaving a whirlpool in its wake.

The remnants of the luncheon had been picked up and burned, the camp put in order, and the boys were seated on the three logs which surrounded the glowing embers. It was the looked-forward-to time when Stephen Mayhew gave them of his store of knowledge. Even Hec was still. Fatty Foster drew a long, contented breath. "Life's really worth living," he announced.

"You're right," Mr. Steve agreed, with a forcefulness which made them all turn toward him; "you're dead right!"

"Any one might think you hadn't found it so before," ventured Nelse.

"I don't suppose I ought to say it, but I haven't." The man leaned back and clasped his hands about



one knee. "I'm twenty-six. I'm not married, and the war's been going a year. Do you know what that means?"

Memories of many conversations between his father and mother flashed through Joe's mind. "I do," he said gently, "but I know the people at Washington asked you to stay at the factory when you volunteered to go last year."

"Who told you that?" Stephen Mayhew's voice fairly snapped.

"My father, sir."

The man looked at the lad for a long second, then slowly rose and, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, walked across the narrow glade, wheeled and came back, his head up, his jaw set. "If you boys were asking your parents why I was not with the colors, how do you think I answered that same question when my conscience asked it of me?" he demanded. "How do you think I've felt when all the fellows I was with at college were getting into olive drab? How do you think I've felt every time I've seen a draft of the boys I grew up with march



out of Gillfield? How do you think I've felt a thousand times a day when I've thought of my country at war?"

"Dunno." Harvey's answer was more confusion than confession.

"I hope you never will know," Mayhew flashed back. "If I live to be ten thousand years old I'll never square my conscience with what I've done. They tell me I've done right, but I can't see it, never will see it. I want you boys to know the real story." He drew a long breath before going on. "You all know that the factory was making time fuses for the French seventy-fives," he began. "When we went in against the Hun, the Ordnance people sent for my father to come to Washington. I went with him. They asked us how many fuses we could make for this country. We said double our then capacity. They told us to double that. It meant the new mills, the new machinery, the new houses for the new workmen. I told them that my father was too old to take on the greater burden alone, that I'd already signed up for Plattsburg, that they could trust



the Mayhew company to do its part and more, but that they must not expect the impossible.

“More officers came in. My father saw it as I did. They argued. We said we’d do our share, but fifty per cent of that share was overseas and that that fifty per cent was my share. At last a lean, square-jawed man with a star on his shoulder, stalked into the room. I think they’d sent for him. His eyelids were half-drawn over black, snapping eyes and there were deep lines about the corners of his straight mouth. He was worn and raw from overwork and his temper was as short as mine. For the first and last time in my life, a man stormed me out of my convictions. He made me see that my duty to my country was here in Gillfield. So I stayed.”

Of a sudden he straightened once more and his shoulders went back. “Last week,” he said, in a ringing voice, “our deliveries exceeded even our big promise. The new shops were running smoothly. I’d done my part of the job. I went to Washington again. I saw that same general. I told him what



we had done and what I was going to do and he offered me a majority in his office."

"Major!" exploded Nelse. "Hope you told him where he got off. You ought to be a colonel, at least."

Mr. Mayhew laughed. "Thanks for the compliment."

"Did you take it, sir?"

"Are you really going?"

"Oh, gee!"

"Yes," he announced, "I'm going. But I'm not going as a major of ordnance. I'm through doing things according to other people's lights. I've only two people to answer to from now on. One's Stephen Mayhew; the other's the President of the United States. Our views on the subject fit to perfection. He's commander-in-chief of the army and he's said how that army's to be raised. His way's my way. I'm draft age. On Monday I'm going with the draft."

"As a private?" gasped Stan.

"As a soldier of the army of the United States,"



corrected Mr. Mayhew. "If there's a prouder title, I've yet to hear it."

Joe Lowell got slowly to his feet. His eyes were shining and his voice shook a little as he held out his hand. "I always knew you'd do it," he said. "I always knew you'd do it."

As quick as he had grasped Stephen Mayhew's hand, he dropped it. "Attention!" he snapped.

The seven came to their feet, their heels together, their backs like ramrods. "We Scouts don't know a great deal about military things," he announced, rushing his words, "and we'll probably do it wrong, but I know every fellow here means it right. Scouts, Private Mayhew of the U. S. Army! Salute!"

Stephen Mayhew bit his lip. It was not the military absurdity of their tribute which made him do it. These boys meant more to him than they dreamed. "Thanks, fellows," he said huskily. "Carry on!"



## CHAPTER II

### CARRYING ON

EVEN Nelse Pease lacked pep. There was no disputing the fact that the gloom in the Lowells' parlor was so thick that it was sticky. The Wolf Patrol had apparently lost more than its Scout Master. Its initiative was missing. Harve Foster recrossed his khaki-clad legs for the fourth time in three minutes. "'S long's we're all here," he growled, "let's get things over with."

"'S your house, Joe," mumbled Wood. " Might 's well try to take his place. Some one's got to."

"All right." Joe Lowell's lips were set tight as he rose. The opening ceremonies of the Patrol's meetings had been as full of snap and vim under the leadership of Stephen Mayhew as they had been of meaning and sincerity. To-night there was a drabness about it all which made every boy more homesick than before for the man who had gone to camp



that morning. They had known they would miss him; they had not appreciated how acute their distress would be.

Ned Field stood it for ten minutes. "Let's cut it out," he erupted. "I've got to go home, anyway; got a pile of studying to do and everything."

"Good idea," Nelse agreed.

"Sorter promised my mother I might be home earlier than usual," offered Foster, beginning to get ready to get up.

"Wonder what Mr. Steve's doing now?" ventured Tug mournfully.

It was just at that moment that, the full moon having peered over the edge of the mountain, Hec, out on the front porch, sat up on his haunches and emitted a howl which made every boy jump, then look around sheepishly to see if any one else had been equally on edge.

"Even Hec misses him," sighed Tug.

"First time he's ever shown signs of intelligence," Fat growled. "Any one going my way?"

Joe sprang to his feet. "Not yet, there isn't," he



announced sharply. "This sort of thing's gone far enough. What are we all, anyway — a lot of yellow quitters?"

"Looks like it," agreed Fat disconsolately. "If that dog howls a third time, I'll bawl."

"Why?" Joe demanded. "Why? Because Mr. Steve's got his chance? Because he's got what he worked tooth and nail for a year to get? Because he's going to fight for his country? We've got a fine chance of licking the Hun, if all the boys in America are acting the way we've acted for the last twenty minutes."

"There's something in that," admitted Nelse.

"There's a whole lot in it," declared Joe. "For a year, about all we've been able to give the Allies is hope and courage. Things look black over there now. But the Hun won't win the Channel ports. The Allies know we're coming and they'll hold. But this is no time for a single American to show a yellow streak, and that's exactly what we've been doing, every one of us. We ought to be standing up, yelling our heads off, because Mr. Steve's gone."



Instead of that we're thinking of ourselves. We're a fine bunch of Scouts, we are!"

"You're dead right, Joe! Every one of us ought to be ashamed of himself. We've fanned out just when we ought to have made a hit. Here's Mr. Steve gone to the bat with his head up and we sit on the bench with our tails down. We're yellow, worse'n yellow. We're no better than Huns. We oughter get back of Mr. Steve, and what he stands for, and really begin to root our heads off."

Alex Cotton sat down again, his face white. It was the first speech he had ever made, but he had made it because he couldn't help himself. It just had to come out.

"Second the motion," cried Stan; "that's my feeling exactly."

"Guess Alex's said what we all feel," admitted Fat. "But talk's cheap; we're not getting anywhere."

"We've got far enough to get our feet under us again," stated Joe. "This hasn't been the Wolf Patrol that's been holding a mourners' meeting."



The real Wolf Patrol will now come to order. Alex, you take the flag."

They caught Joe's idea in a flash. As Cotton unfurled the colors, it was an entirely different set of boys who stood at attention, and there was a new ring in their voices as they repeated the oath of allegiance to the flag. It had meant much to them before, this glorious piece of red, white and blue silk, but now each boy seemed to see another flag beside it, a flag also of red and white, but on this second flag was but one star — and that of blue.

It was Nelson Pease who first spoke after the opening ceremonies of this very real meeting. "If your mother wouldn't mind, Joe," he said, "I'd like to make the motion we bring Hec in here. The old fellow's lonesome out there on the porch."

"Course she won't mind," assented Joe.

"Move Fat be appointed a committee of one to escort him in."

"Second that motion," grinned Harve, getting up.

Hector was duly introduced, but it was a quiet and rather dejected Hec. Alex leaned forward and



scratched a yellow ear. "Good ole Hec!" he muttered.

"Now about this Patrol?" began Nelse again. "Mr. Steve having been granted a leave of absence by unanimous consent, none of us is apt to suggest putting any one in his place as Scout Master."

There was, both in his tone and glance, a suggestion that any such action would be rather unhealthy for a careless proposer. But the chorus came quick and sharp.

"Not much!"

"Hardly!"

"Well, I guess not!"

"Such being the case," went on Nelse, "looks to me 's if we'd got to do one thing we'd always avoided — that's choose a leader of the Patrol. Mr. Steve always wanted us to elect one, but I guess we all felt the same way. We've been a pretty tight little corporation and we've had an equal say in everything. One fellow's say was as good as the next one. It's worked, too."

Joe Lowell rose reluctantly. "Guess you're



right, Nelse," he agreed. "I always have been against it, but I guess you're right now. Some one's got to be in command. I suppose the Scout Commissioner will want that, and I suppose he'll pick one of us, if we ask him to. But I'd like to keep it all amongst ourselves. Any one of you fellows would make as good a leader as another. I'll obey any one you choose. But I don't believe any of you likes the idea of voting for some one any more than I do. Don't let's do it," he urged; "there might be a tie and some one might feel badly about being defeated. I don't think any fellow would, but he might. That's why I want to make a suggestion: I'll fix seven slips of paper, different lengths, then each of you draw one. The fellow who gets the longest slip is patrol leader."

"Good idea!" agreed Harvey. "Fine idea, m —"

"Knew you'd all think so," broke in Joe.

"Once in awhile I'd like to finish what I start," went on Fat, with unusual soberness. "Although you've been doing most of the talking, I believe Alex



is in the chair and I'm addressing the chair. So you, being out of order, disturbing the peace and butting in generally, go back somewhere, build an igloo and crawl into it. Now fellows," he went on, turning to the smiling circle, which understood his outburst as well as his best friend had understood it, "this seven-slips-of-paper stuff is just like old Joey, — never think of making it eight, he wouldn't. Give every one else a chance — that's his idea. Fine young idea, fine! But," he said, suddenly earnest, "it goes to prove what we all feel. There's only one fellow here for the place and that's the chap who didn't think of himself. Move Joe Lowell be unanimously elected by acclamation."

"But, Fat —"

"If you've any further motions, announcements or kicks, try to make 'em to the chair," advised Harve; "I've a motion before the house."

"Any one second the motion?" asked Alex.

"Sure!"

"Yes."

"Vote."



"Those in favor of Harvey's motion."

"Yes!" It came in seven loud voices.

"Opposed."

"No."

"Yeas have it," announced the chair. "Glad of it, Joe. Hate to preside."

"You ought to — the way you do," comforted Nelse. "Speech! Speech!"

Joe Lowell tried to argue, but they would not listen. It had never entered his mind that any one could think of him as a leader. He was sure he was the least fitted of them all for the place. Knowing that he lacked the fun-making abilities of Nelse, the athletic ability of Cotton, the happy-go-lucky disposition of Harvey, he considered himself only as a part of the background. In reality he had grown to be both background and backbone of the Wolf Patrol and of the eight he was the only one who remained unconscious of that fact. Modest to a degree, he had never in his life had time or inclination to give himself a thought. For four happy years his one idea had been to make the Wolves as



near perfect as was possible and, in striving to do for an organization, he had done even more for an individual. Stephen Mayhew had watched the boy grow and broaden and when he had left Gillfield he was as sure of what would happen within the Patrol as he was sure what would happen at the factory. He was a builder who knew every stone which went into his arches and the very last to neglect the key-stone.

“All right,” Joe at last agreed, “I’ll do the best I can. There’s going to be times when we’ll all wish we had a Scout Master, and the Commissioner’ll probably want to assign some one to our patrol, but —”

“Nothin’ doin’!” broke in Harve. “Not a leaf stirs in that neck of woods. I’m about the last guy who’d vote to start any mutiny, but Mr. Steve’s place can’t be filled. He’s in the service, and his place stays open till he comes back. Mr. Nelson is one good Commissioner and he’ll see what we mean and he’ll approve. That is,” he added, “he’ll approve ’slong as we play the game. And we won’t



do much of anything else when it means we're doing it in Mr. Steve's honor."

"You bet we won't!" came the fervent chorus.

"Got a letter from Mr. Nelson in my pocket," announced Joe, producing an envelope. "Forgot all about it."

"New leader's making a fine young start," chuckled Nelse. "Going to bother to read the thing, Joey?"

"Thought I might."

"That will be nice!" declared the enthusiastic Fat. "How pleased Mr. Nelson will be when he learns of your generosity."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Field.

"Who woke you up?" demanded Wood.

"Order!" Joe unfolded the sheet he drew from the envelope and began to read: —

Members of the Wolf Patrol: — The campaign for subscriptions for the Third Liberty Loan will begin a week from date. Our organization has again been asked to play its part. Knowing the patriotism of all Scouts, I have accepted for the Gillfield organizations, without the unnecessary formality of consulting with the various patrols.



Your Patrol is assigned the same territory and duties given it during the last campaign. Your leader will report to me on Wednesday afternoon at three for further instructions. Yours truly,

GEORGE NELSON,  
Scout Commissioner.

Joe folded the paper. "What is your pleasure?" he asked.

"Eating," announced Harvey promptly. "But duty comes first. You be at that office at 2:45 Wednesday and, when they give you our quota, look scared, then tell 'em we'll raise just twice that amount."

"That's the talk!"

"Can't beat the Wolves!"

"Not when it comes to trying to do our bit!"

"We'll raise all they ask us and then some," declared Ned Field. "We'll sure do it. But how? Mr. Steve's not with us this time."

"All the more reason to beat our old record. This is the 'Mayhew drive.'"

"No, it's not," vetoed Joe promptly. "This is a drive for the United States."



"That's right, too."

"Trust old Joey to see things straight."

"Say, there's one guy I choose," announced Fat.

"I went after him last Loan."

"Who?"

"Stone, Henry Stone."

A quick frown passed over Joe's face, but Nelse Pease laughed contemptuously. "That's just like Fat," he declared. "Trust him to pick the easy ones."

"Is that so?" drawled Harve. "What do you know about it, anyway?"

"I know you got \$150 from him, and I know Mr. Steve went back with you and got another \$100. If that isn't easy, I'd like to know what is."

"Seeing the big committee had him down for \$1500, seeing he told Mr. Nelson he'd only subscribe through the Scouts, seeing he's rich, and seein' we blasted only a sixth of what we wanted out of him, I don't call it any cinch," protested Fat. "Some of the things he said about the government wasting money, and not being called on to fight in



Europe, made me hot. I want another chance to talk to him."

"Mr. Steve put in another \$500 to make him take that last \$100," stated Field. "Mr. Stone's always been so generous in town no one could understand why he was so tight about the Loan."

"He told my father, when pa went to see him about it," ventured Tug, "that he had just paid for his house and didn't have the money."

"House, me eye!" snorted Harve. "That guy's still a Hun. That's what's the matter with him."

There was nothing savoring of diplomacy or caution in Foster's charge. Little Tug's eyes grew round with fear. "Oh, Harve!" he protested.

"Yes, 'Oh, Harve!'" Fat replied. "I'll tell you 'Oh, Harve!' That guy was born in Germany, brought up in Germany and, while he's lived here ten years, is naturalized and has even changed his name from Heinrich Stein to Henry Stone, he's still as much of a Hun under his big, fat skin as he was the day he ate his first dish of sauerkraut on the banks of the Rhine, or up in Prussia, or wherever



it was they threw him out from. They say there's only one kind of a good Indian but, believe me, even a dead Indian's got something on a dead Hun. I don't like 'em even dead. Stone's a Hun," he insisted.

"Then why'd he buy any Liberty Bonds?" demanded Tug.

Harvey looked pityingly at the youngster. "If I knew, I'd tell some one else," he retorted. "He's always been white to me; he bought two bonds from me after he'd refused every one else. But, just the same, I don't like him. What's more, I don't trust him."

"Old Mr. Mayhew seems to," objected Alex. "Stone's worked at the plant ever since he came to Gillfield."

"But Mr. Steve —"

"Let Mr. Steve do his own talking, Harve," broke in Joe quickly.

Foster was far from being as foolish as he was angry. "Sure!" he agreed. "But let me do mine, too. I'm going on record about this Stein-Stone



cootie now and for all time. Once a Hun, always a Hun. And you feel just the same way about him, too, Joe Lowell."



## CHAPTER III

### OUT IN THE OPEN

WHILE the younger generation of Gillfield looked up to John Mayhew because he was the father of "Mr. Steve," the older generation respected the grim old man because he was the source of the town's prosperity. For more than an hundred years a Mayhew had owned a factory in Gillfield. But it was "the old boss," as he was popularly called, who had developed the business into an industry, who had seen the conservatively amassed Mayhew fortune treble and treble again, and who, in the late fall of 1914, had seen the demand for shells across the sea and laid new plans according to his vision.

The result had been that the Mayhew fortune was again in a fair way of being trebled. Mr. Mayhew's reputation was such that few of the delicate fuses for the long, glittering shells had been re-



jected by the foreign inspectors. This proved both the value of honest workmanship and intelligent organization, and, next to his own son, there was but one man in his employ whom the old boss prized higher. That was this same Henry Stone whom Harvey Foster had seen fit to dub an unspeakable Hun.

The boy had been well within the truth when saying that Stone was once Stein. As Stein he had come to Gillfield from Drusseldorf, and, while that was ten years before, the man of twenty-six was not only an acknowledged, but a proved, expert on steel. Rather small, dark of hair and face and deliberate of manner, his first few years in the New England town had been wholly devoted to his work and his personal affairs. Every one knew he had read much and written some. While it was popularly supposed his writings were largely for the technical papers of his native land, his reading was general and, after he had thoroughly mastered the English tongue, there were few in Gillfield who cared to argue with him a second time. Yet with his positiveness, he



was polite to a degree, as good a listener as talker and, as a result, he gathered a certain amount of popularity among those who respected intellect.

The taking out of his naturalization papers had created no ripple of interest. Gillfield could see nothing strange in any man's wanting to be as much an American as the law would permit. Neither had his change of name created undue comment. Gillfield believed a man's personal affairs were his own, so long as that man was a good citizen and obeyed the law. Therefore, Henry Stone had lived quietly, minded his own business and prospered, for John Mayhew recognized ability and rewarded it with advancement.

Much to every one's surprise, it had been George Nelson, the self-contained cashier of the Gillfield bank, who had deliberately challenged Mr. Stone in those days when the Hun horde was sweeping, victorious, through brave Belgium. Quietly, soberly, they had it out in the directors' room behind the old-fashioned vault at the bank, and, while from then on there had been only the most formal friendship



visible between the two, Stone's statements of his sympathies had apparently been accepted as satisfactory. The fact of his American citizenship, and his evident desire not to discuss the war, kept the rest of Gillfield from openly challenging his sentiments.

But as time had passed, the patriotic townspeople more and more avoided Mr. Stone, and he was as quick to notice this as he was clever in dissembling any pain their aloofness may have caused him. At the best, his situation was unpleasant, and, so long as he did nothing to make it more so, the rest permitted him to go his way in peace.

When America at last went in, Henry Stone spoke openly. Again it had been Mr. Nelson who had faced him, but this time, publicly, and Stone had frankly stated that, between the land of his birth and the land of his adoption, his choice had already been made. And that choice was recorded in his naturalization papers. But there were many in Gillfield who now gave him a still wider berth. He accepted their decision without comment or show of feeling. Those noble souls, who believe good of all



their fellow men, said his cross was heavy — but did not invite him to Sunday supper.

It was this self-same Mr. Stone of whom Harvey and Joe Lowell spoke as they stood beside Mr. Nelson's desk a week after Joe had been made leader of the Wolf Patrol. "We've done even better than we hoped," Joe acknowledged, "but \$50 and \$100 subscriptions don't raise our total very fast. I guess that's one reason why Harve wants permission to try Mr. Stone."

"Your spirit's good," replied Mr. Nelson kindly, "but don't let that blind you to the main object. That's over-subscribing Gillfield's allotment to the Loan. And the way to do that is by team play. We're a unit as a town, not merely individuals, or organizations, out for a little temporary glory. Frankly, I think one of the older men can get a larger subscription from Mr. Stone than Harvey can."

Fat shifted uncomfortable. "Are you going after him yourself?" he ventured.

George Nelson would not have been selected as



Scout Commissioner had he not understood boys. "Haden't thought of it," he said with a smile. "I rather thought we might get Mr. Mayhew to speak to him."

"Haven't a leg left to stand on," admitted Fat promptly. "All I can do now is ask for second chance, if the victim's still suspected of having any pennies left on his person. But say, Mr. Nelson, can't you slip the Wolves one good prospect?"

This time the man laughed. "If I had one, I'd give it to some other patrol."

"Thanks for them kind words of praise," Fat grinned. "Sorry to have wasted your time, sir. Good-by!"

"Hold on a minute," ordered Mr. Nelson. "Come here, both of you."

Surprised at his change of tone, the two moved back to his desk, but it was Joe who noticed the cashier glance beyond them, as if to see if any one else was within hearing. "Why did you pick Henry Stone as a prospect?" he demanded.



"Because I think he's a Hun," promptly replied the boy.

For a long moment the man looked deep into the frank, blue eyes. "That's a pretty serious charge to make against a man these days," he said soberly. "What reason have you for your assertion? You must have some that cannot be contradicted."

"I haven't," he admitted. "I just don't trust him, that's all."

"Then you've no right to lay such a charge against him," declared the cashier. "Even in war time, a man must be considered innocent until he's proved guilty."

"I'd let a few of them prove their innocence from the inside of a prison camp, if I had my way," Harvey mumbled, feeling he had been both misunderstood and reproved.

"You're not alone in that sentiment," admitted Mr. Nelson; "yet I don't believe either you, or the people who think like you, are entirely right. There's a great deal going on in this country that we don't know about, and a great deal that the authorities do know about, and that no one but the



authorities know they do know. I think you're quite safe in leaving any investigations to the men whose business it is to investigate, my boy."

"You mean the secret service?"

"Those two words mean a number of things these days, Joe. It's a fairly good idea to take some things for granted and not go around asking too many questions."

"That's not fair," protested Harvey. "We come in here, and tell you things we'd never dream of telling any other man, and then you go and get us all excited about the one thing that interests us and end up by telling us not to be curious. I read the papers once in awhile and I know about the Department of Justice and all it's doing."

Mr. Nelson chuckled. "Maybe the Department doesn't give all its secrets to the reporters," he suggested; "its officials certainly have done a good job so far. There are others equally busy, however. The A. P. L. is one of them."

"What's the A. P. L.?" Harvey leaned far over the edge of the desk.



"American Protective League."

"Never heard of it."

"Neither have I," said Joe.

"Thought you read the papers," Mr. Nelson reminded him. "That's a bit unfair, though. The League isn't advertising over-much. But, if you had persisted in your literary efforts, Harve, you'd have found out that the League was started as a great volunteer organization, with members in every town and city in the United States, who did — and do — all they can to help the country in any way possible. If a member hears something he believes the people in Washington should know about, he informs the proper person. I imagine the people at Washington also ask the League members to investigate once in awhile, also."

"Have we a League here in Gillfield?" demanded Harvey.

"I presume so."

"Who belongs?"

"That may be something a lot of others might like to know, youngster."



"Bet you're head of it," exploded the admiring Harve.

"There you go, jumping at conclusions again," warned the man. "Only one thing you can be sure of, and that is that a member of any of the three great organizations which have done so much to foil the Germans over here, does not go about announcing his affiliations."

"But what's the third one?" asked Joe. "You've told us about the League, and every one knows about the Department of Justice."

"And it's equally true that comparatively few know the first thing about the third strong arm."

"But what's it called?"

"It's such a tight little body, Joe, that those who are aware of its existence don't talk about it. About all I know is that there is such a thing and that it's doing wonderful work. So," he added, "you can be fairly sure that, if Mr. Stone is doing anything he should not do, some one is rather more than apt to be watching him. I've told you all this so that you wouldn't do or say anything foolish and spoil



work that others may be doing. I know that you will consider it all between us three."

"Of course."

"Sure, we'll keep mum," agreed Harvey. "One reason why we will is because you haven't told us anything."

"Well," retorted the man, with a smile, "you may be right. But even if you are, don't talk. There are a lot of people talking these days who wouldn't make half so much noise if they knew who was listening to them. One thing I will tell you, and I don't care how much you repeat it, and that is that the United States has mighty sharp ears!"

"Mine feel longer every minute," grinned Fatty. "Come on, Joe; let's get out of here before I begin to bray."

Once more on the sidewalk, the boys paused in the warm spring sunshine, undecided which way to turn and just what to do. Gillfield's main street was bright with its war flags, and posters of the Loan made vivid appeals from every store window. "We've got to find a big fish," declared Harvey,



moodily. "Wonder if old Cole would take another \$500?"

"He told us to see him to-morrow," Lowell reminded him. "Next to Mr. Mayhew, Mr. Cole buys more bonds than any one here."

"If any one else tells me something I know already," wailed Fat, "I'll sit down on the curb and blub. Gee, but Mr. Nelson was a crab not to loosen! I'd rather know about the secret service than anything."

"What do you suppose that third thing he was talking about, is?"

"Dunno, and I guess I'm not apt to."

"Well, forget it."

"You've got about as much curiosity as a fish," snorted Fat. "Come on while I sell a bond."

While it was customary for Harvey to follow, this afternoon he assumed the leadership. For once in his short life, Joe Lowell appeared to be lacking in resource. It was not because his heart was not in his work, but because it had been too much in it, and, rack his brains as he would, he



could think of none whose name appeared on the Scouts' rather restricted list of possible buyers, whom he, or some other member of the Patrol, had not interviewed. He was sure the Wolves had sold more bonds than any of their rivals, but, this time, they had determined to get twice as many pledges as any other body of Gillfield Scouts, and he knew that to do this, they would have to get one really big subscription. For two hours they made another house-to-house canvass, but pledges for \$100 were the net result.

It was almost six o'clock when, at last, they turned up the hill toward their homes and even Fat had lost some of his enthusiasm. "This town's got about as much patriotism as a sick clam!" he growled.

"It's going to exceed its quota by twenty-five per cent," contradicted Joe belligerently. "Trouble is, it's been raked clean."

Harvey did a bit of mental arithmetic as he ambled. "'S near as I can figure offhand," he announced, "we fellows have got to get \$1350 in



pledges, if we're going to go over the top. And I'll bet the rest of the crowd haven't raised as much to-day as we have. They —"

"Foster!"

It was a command in its sharp insistence and they spun around in their surprise. "Oh, gee!" gasped Fat. "Stone! 'Where do we go from here, boys?'"

The same thought was in the minds of both boys as the man caught up with them. It was as characteristic that he did not hurry, as that he did not show the impatience he felt because they had not met him more than half way. At least in one thing, the German-American reached the acme of perfection — none could read from his expression what was going on in his mind. It was equally characteristic that he should fall into step between the two. Somehow or other, he always managed to divide any group he came in contact with.

"I have been expecting you at the office for three days, Joe." he said, taking hold of the boy's elbow in friendly fashion, "and, expecting you, I naturally





“THEY SPUN AROUND IN THEIR SURPRISE”







looked for this big, good-natured shadow of yours. Why have you neglected me? ”

“ Don’t think we have,” grunted Fat, who hated to have any one but a friend refer to his bulk.

“ Aren’t you peddling bonds this time? ”

“ No,” flared Harvey. “ You don’t have to peddle Liberty Bonds.”

The man laughed. “ What a young hotspur! ” he exclaimed. “ Certainly I meant no slur on our country’s bonds, as none should know better than you, who sold me the last I purchased.”

“ You made us work, all right, all right,” Harvey retorted, with a short laugh.

“ Of course I made you work,” came the hearty response; “ you were making your initial bow as a salesman and I did my best to show my interest in Gillfield by teaching one of its young men some of the problems he will have to face in later life.”

“ Oh! ”

The man looked at Foster keenly. That exclamation did not contain the germ of real enthusiasm. “ Never mind,” he said negligently. “ Perhaps



you'll be more appreciative in later years. I've always been interested in you two boys and I'm always glad, and always will be glad, to do anything I can to help either of you."

"That's certainly kind in you." Joe felt that his friend might have been too blunt.

"Not at all, youngster. But one thing has hurt me. I thought you'd come around for my Loan subscription this time."

"You're not on our list."

"What's that matter, Harvey?" He paused as they came opposite the gate of his attractive home. "Step into the house for a minute," he suggested; "I want to talk this over with you both."

"I'm late for supper now," Harvey answered. "I'd like nothing better than to sell you a couple of thousand dollars' worth of bonds, but you're not on our list."

"A couple of thousand dollars' worth!" Mr. Stone seemed really amused. "That is one of the most subtle pieces of flattery I have come across. Just because you're developing into such a diplomat,



Harvey, I believe I'll give you my subscription, whether you want it or not."

The man's merriment was apparently so genuine that Harvey joined in his laughter. "Nothin' doin', sir!" he replied. "We've been told to keep hands off."

"By whom?"

The question was so sharp that Fat was sure that he had said something he should have left unsaid. But, before he could recover his rather slow moving wits, Joe stepped into the breach. "By the executive committee," he explained. "When we Scouts were assigned the territory we were to solicit in, we were warned not to interfere with any of the business men. From what I know of the general lines of the campaign, sir, your subscription will go in with those from the Mayhew office."

"Oh! Then I'm to have nothing to say as to whom my money goes."

"It all goes toward helping lick the Hun," stated Harvey.

"I'm aware of its ultimate intent," retorted Mr.



Stone. "What I question, is the right of any committee to tell me, or any other citizen of this free country, what I shall do, or what I shall not do, with money I have earned and which I intend to invest in my own way."

"That's something you'll have to talk over with Mr. Mayhew or Mr. Nelson," confessed Joe; "it's over my head. We Scouts need all the subscriptions we can get — there's no argument about that. But we have to get them according to the rules. We play the game, you know, sir."

"But I don't see any sense to such rules," retorted the man.

"Neither do I," grunted Fat.

The man turned on him. "Good enough!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad to see you have the courage to say what you think. It goes to show you believe in asserting your individuality. That is always healthy."

Joe Lowell was dumbfounded. He saw that his friend had been trapped and he had a vague feeling that there was something very wrong in what



the man implied. "Harvey never believes in any rules when he's hungry," he announced, with an easy laugh; "and he's already said he was late for supper. He'll feel better, after he's eaten for an hour or so."

Mr. Stone smiled. "I see you know your human nature as well as your history," he said, "but neither Harvey nor I are plotting any revolution founded on the empty stomach propaganda. Seriously, however, I want to do something for you boys. You're the right sort and I thoroughly approve of the way you do things. For that reason, I'm going to insist on your taking my subscription and I'm going to make it a big one. Give me one of your pledge cards, Harvey, and I'll sign up for three one-hundred-dollar bonds."

"I've told you we can't take it," retorted Joe. "I'm sorry, but —"

"Suppose I refuse to give it to any one else?"

"I can't help that, sir. All we can do is follow orders. If you want to give your big subscription through the office at the factory, and then give us



three hundred dollars, we'll be only too grateful for the extra."

"The extra! You talk as if I were planning to take a thousand."

"Aren't you?" Harvey's voice was once more bland and innocent.

"I'm not. I'm far from being even well-to-do. Three hundred is all I can afford to give and I'll give that only to you."

"You're not 'giving' to any one," corrected Fat; "you're loaning to your — to the United States."

"I don't like your implication, young man," Mr. Stone said sharply. "The United States is my adopted country. While I may be of German birth, neither to you, nor any of the people of this town, have I given cause to doubt my loyalty. What others think, matters little to me. While I am aware that there is a certain spirit of hostility to me here, I only am aware as to how ungrounded it is and how little it affects me." He stopped and the smile came back to his lips. "Why am I talking thus?" he asked. "Because I like you young-



sters and I imagine that what you think really does matter to me."

It was so frankly said that Harvey, the bellicose, felt momentarily ashamed. "Guess you're right," he admitted uncomfortably.

"Guess I am. Now give me that pledge card and then we'll all go to supper and feel better."

"And you'll give Mr. Mayhew what he asks for, too?"

"Oh, oh! So it's Mr. Mayhew who has my name, is it?"

Too late Harvey appreciated his break and hated himself accordingly. Thoroughly mad, he threw caution to the winds and leaped into the dark. "It is," he blazed, "and it's because you suspected it that you've waylaid us. You thought we'd fall for your piker's subscription and that would let you out with him. But you get one more guess."

"You've said about enough, my young friend."

"I'm not 'your young friend,' or any other sort of friend, you —"

"Quit it, Harve!" ordered Joe sharply.



“I’m not going to quit till I’m through,” he stormed on. “I’ve been made a fool of once tonight and I’m going to have my say out now and be done with it.” He flashed around on the outwardly calm man again. “I don’t know what your game is, but I’m going to find out. You’ve been trying to work us and I came mighty near biting. I got your subscription for the Second Loan, but I had to have help. You haven’t had a change of heart without some mighty good reason. I’m trying to earn two dollars a week to pay for my \$50 bond, but you’re trying to get by with three hundred, and earning that much a month. Something’s wrong somewhere. I may be the only one in Gillfield who thinks so, but I do think so, and I wouldn’t take your subscription now for a thousand bonds, if you planked down the cash. I don’t like you. I don’t trust you. I don’t want anything to do with you. Come on, Joe, my supper’s ready.”



## CHAPTER IV

### THE LION'S DEN

IF Harvey Foster thought he could empty his hot young head without reaping anything in the way of personal harvest, events proved his judgment as faulty as his tongue was loose. Henry Stone's life in Gillfield had, heretofore, been one uncolored by verbal protests, yet now he lost no time in formally recounting his interview with Harvey to Mr. Foster and, with equal formality, demanding that the lad apologize. Mr. Stone did not suggest the alternative of Harvey's submitting proof of his assertions; neither did Mr. Foster appear to consider that his son had any grounds for claiming such privilege.

But when the quickly culminated crisis was presented to big, good-natured Harvey, he surprised every one with frank and open rebellion. He absolutely and utterly refused to have anything further to do, or say, with Mr. Henry Stone. Pleadings,



arguments and threats failed to budge him from his position. He had fired his guns and he stood fast by the smoking muzzles, his jaw set and his head up.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Foster were dumbfounded at what they felt was their son's unpardonable rudeness and unreasonable mutiny against their authority. They were positive that the outraged man, once he had started to force the issue, would not let the affair drop, but they were equally surprised when no further demands came from him. Mr. Foster's explanation was that Stone had done all that a dignified gentleman could do; Mrs. Foster's that he had successfully brought shame upon the Foster home, and Fat's that "the guy's bluff didn't work." Which latter explanation did not add to the not happy atmosphere of the Foster home.

Old Boss Mayhew, who was commonly reputed to hear every leaf which fell from a Gillfield tree and to know the reason thereof, got wind of the affair through some of the murmurings of his grapevine system. While he considered Stone one of the most valuable men in his plant, he was not so enthus-



iastic over Nathan Foster who, by long years of service, had risen to an assistant-foremanship in one of the finishing rooms. He was frankly furious when, on going through his office, in person, for Loan subscriptions, Mr. Stone signed for a \$100 bond and haughtily refused to listen to protests. He had offered a larger subscription; it had been rudely refused. Anything further he might do would be done outside Gillfield, where broader people held more tolerant views. The old boss put the whole affair squarely up to Mr. Nelson and, at the same time, had a few things to say about the Scouts which the commissioner did not think would do for any advertising campaign.

The majority of the elders, who heard either the true story, or one of its many highly colored variations, had scant sympathy with the boy. There was no disputing the fact that Harvey Foster had, as he would have expressed it himself, "gotten in Dutch." His one comfort, and a real shock to men like Mr. Nelson — was the attitude of Joe Lowell. Yet it would not have been Joe, if he had run around talk-



ing with every one. But it was the real Joe who said little but clung to Fat Foster closer than ever. There was absolutely no question in any one's mind that the best-liked boy in the town was risking his reputation by standing squarely behind a friend in trouble.

Beyond a doubt the Foster-Stone incident played a major part in the minor results which accrued to the Loan campaign of the Wolf Patrol. Whenever one of its members approached a likely prospect, said prospect either frankly said he did not approve of the Patrol's methods and would give his subscription elsewhere, or tried to pump the details of the Foster eruption from an embarrassed lad. Joe had promised to raise double their quota; it now seemed beyond the limits of the possible for the boys to come within a thousand dollars of the limit of their goal. And a thousand dollars is a lot of money for boys to raise.

The final week of the drive dragged out its painful course for the Wolves. Word filtered over the mountain from Kendallville that the Beavers, the



Wolves' great rival in the district, had gone over their quota with flying colors. This victory for the Beavers was bad enough, but what made the situation even worse, was that the Fox Patrol, its membership composed of some of the youngest Gillfield boys, had secured a thousand-dollar subscription from some unknown source and, with only \$200 to raise to beat the quota of the Wolves, was loudly and openly campaigning for the scalps of Joe Lowell and his seven now desperate followers.

While Joe said nothing, he felt the situation keenly. Failure to raise the full quota meant the Wolves' first failure to make good. But it was not because such failure would reflect upon his newly acquired leadership that the boy worried; it was because he had a very definite conviction that, unless the Wolves went over the top in this drive, they would have failed to back up Mr. Steve. That was more than he could bear.

The last day of the campaign came. The final meeting of the Loan Committee that night promised to be a great affair, for it was more than whispered



that Gillfield would exceed, not only her quota, but her record. All that Saturday morning the Wolves worked like real soldiers, but at noon were forced to admit that they were \$850 short of their pledged quota. It was Tug who had reported that the Foxes had raised their required \$200. Doomed to be poor and defeated seconds, gloom settled deep upon the eight.

"There's only one man who can help us out," declared Joe gloomily; "I'll go see him this afternoon."

"Who is he?" The chorus was more mournful than curious.

"Mr. Mayhew."

"Whew!"

"You've heard what he said about us."

"Swell chance!" exploded Nick. "All you'll get will be a trimming. Better set Fat on Stone again."

"Forget that stuff!" growled Harvey. "I'll attend to my own affairs."

"None of that!" Joe ordered sharply. "We



fellows are a unit and don't any of you forget it."

"What sort of argument are you going to make?" asked Alex listlessly. "They say the Boss has taken \$50,000 worth."

"Dunno," admitted the leader. "We'll say something."

"We! Who's we?"

"Fat and I."

"Fat!"

"Gee!"

"Why not go explode a real bomb in his office?"

Harvey got slowly to his feet. They all looked for an explosion as a result of this startling suggestion. Expectation, however, turned to an audible gasp. "You're on!" agreed the big fellow quickly. "Let's go."

For two heated minutes the other six tried to persuade the crusaders to reconsider, to allow some other pair to take their places, to do almost anything, but to no purpose. Joe had made a suggestion; Harvey could be as blindly loyal as his friend.

The two were strangely silent as they approached



the one-storied brick office building which stood between the old part of the Mayhew plant and the new. It was familiar ground to both, yet this afternoon both felt a certain dread as they turned in at the gate. "Better see your father first," suggested Fat, in a gruff voice.

Joe shook his head. "We're here to see Mr. Mayhew."

"Sure! Just made the suggestion, that's all."

But, as they entered the office, Mr. Lowell was hurrying past the door. He stopped abruptly. "Hello, boys," he greeted them; "what brings you here?"

"Want to see Mr. Mayhew, dad."

A strange expression came into the superintendent's eyes. He knew his own son, and he thought he knew Harvey Foster, yet he could imagine but one reason which could have brought them into what promised to be a lion's den. And, while Mr. Lowell was as loyal to the Mayhews as he had been when he first began to work for the old boss as an errand boy, down in his secret heart of hearts he had an



unbreathed suspicion that Fatty Foster had spoken a good deal of truth during his now famous Stone oration. That they should have come to apologize struck him queerly, yet he believed he understood their motive and respected them for their manliness, even if he did not approve of their surrender. "Mr. Mayhew's busy just now," he said quietly. "Sit down here and wait, or come into my office, if you'd rather."

"Guess we'll wait here by the door," sighed Fat.

The man glanced at the anxious face and chuckled in spite of himself. "All right," he agreed; "but there's a window in my office, Harve."

"This is Joe's party," the boy retorted. "I don't need a window; I guess it's a running start for mine."

Mr. Lowell stopped, looked at the two again, saw that his first guess had been a poor one, turned quickly and went into his own room. "Whatever they do," he muttered, "those two lads will stand on their own feet. They've learned not to talk too much again."



Yet, in spite of his confidence in them, he found it convenient to pass across his doorway three times within the next fifteen minutes. He was curious to see how the two would endure what he knew must be a long wait and he was anxious that they carry through their unknown mission, once they had begun it. Also he was a bit disturbed as to their reception, for he knew that the old boss was in one of his bearlike moods — and with just cause. For the first time, the inspectors had rejected a big consignment of finished fuses and Mr. Mayhew felt the shame of that rejection far more than he did the financial loss. Where the Mayhew reputation was touched, the old boss sought reasons with no light paw.

Both boys jumped when the door to his private office opened with a jerk. One flushed red and the other went white as Henry Stone stalked out, his face set. “And see you find out, and report to me, mighty promptly,” they heard Mr. Mayhew roar after him.

It was more than evident that Mr. Stone’s inter-



view had not been entirely to his liking. As he passed, Joe spoke, as he had always done when meeting him at the plant, but this time Stone did not respond. His whole attitude was that of a man too intent on pressing business to give thought to any such minor details as two boys.

"Still fond of us, ain't he!" Fat observed, under his breath. "Bet he's been getting his and hope he got it good and plenty."

"Forget him," Joe advised. "Come on."

Both on account of his father's position, and because of his many visits to Stephen Mayhew, Joe was a more or less privileged character in the office, where every one seemed to be his friend. For that reason none stopped the two as they walked to Mr. Mayhew's door and stood in silence, waiting for the old gentleman to notice them.

Seated at an old-fashioned roll-top desk, the white-haired man was glaring at a sheet of figures from beneath bushy, iron-gray brows. His face was red and smooth shaven, his jaw belligerently square, his broad shoulders even squarer and his



gray eyes of the kind which glow in spite of their color. His whole attitude was of rigid, open anger and, from time to time, his thin nostrils quavered as he puffed indignantly. When, at last, he felt the two pairs of eyes fixed on him, he glowered over the top of his paper. "Well, well!" he barked. "What are you doing there? What do you want?"

"We'd like to talk with you for a minute, sir." It was Joe who spoke.

"Too busy. Can't bother with you. Come in."

That, too, was characteristic, and Joe, who loved the old gentleman, instead of mortally fearing him, as did most of the boys, advanced confidently into the room. "We're Boy Scouts," he began.

"So I've heard," broke in Mr. Mayhew sharply. "Heard all about you." He turned on Fat. "You're the nincompoop who called my Mr. Stone pro-German," he charged.

"Not quite, sir," contradicted Harvey.

The man stiffened, the paper fell to the desk and, wheeling round in his chair, he placed a great hand



on either knee and fixed his glowing eyes on the lad.  
“Not backing water, are you, young fellow?” he roared.

“No, sir, I’m not.”

“Can’t prove anything against him, can you?”

“No, sir.”

“Father and mother don’t approve of what you’ve done, do they?”

“No, sir.”

“Mr. Nelson given you fits, hasn’t he?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Whole town thinks you made a blithering idiot of yourself, doesn’t it?”

“I don’t care what the town thinks,” flared Fat, beginning to get angry under such sharp catechism.

“Umph! Don’t you?” He leaned back in his chair and looked the lad over from head to foot.  
“You’ve got spirit, anyway,” he announced; “you may be a fool, but you’ve got a fool’s courage in your convictions. What do you want, Joe?”

“We came up to see if you wouldn’t give us an additional bond subscription, sir. We know —”



“Never mind what you know. You’ve told your errand; don’t enlarge on it. Not good business.”

“Will you give us one, sir?”

“No.”

“But, sir —”

“I said no,” snapped Mr. Mayhew, reaching for his papers.

“But, sir —”

“Said no,” reiterated the old gentleman. “No argument about it.”

“Is it because you’re sore at our Patrol because I told Stone what I thought of him?” blurted the desperate Harvey.

Mr. Mayhew swung around again. “What if it is?” he demanded. “What would you do about it — apologize to him?”

“No, sir,” declared the boy hotly.

“Then what would you do?”

“Ask you to play fair with the other fellows. Not take it out on them for what I may have done or said.”

Mr. Mayhew was beginning to enjoy this large,



fat boy who didn't seem afraid to say what he thought. Too many people cringed before the all-powerful old boss to suit him. He was far from being a bully by nature; rather he was a sportsman who was always on the lookout for some flint which would answer his steel with sparks. "Told Nelson what I thought of his Scouts," he said; "care to have me repeat it?"

"Guess we wouldn't especially enjoy it," Fat admitted, with a sheepish grin. "Heard you treated us sorter rough."

"Did, did you? I did. You deserved it."

"If I did, the others didn't. I only spoke for myself, sir. I'll get out and you buy some bonds from Joe."

"Said I wouldn't buy any more bonds, young man."

"But we only want you to take another thousand dollars' worth," explained Joe.

"Another thousand!" exclaimed the man. "Only another thousand? I like your impudence! Here you bring with you the boy who says I'm em-



ploying a pro-German and have the impudence to ask me for a thousand dollars."

"I didn't say you were employing a Hun," declared Harvey stoutly.

"You think so, don't you?" snapped Mr. Mayhew.

"I didn't say anything about you, one way or the other."

"But you think so, don't you?" he reiterated.

"Mr. Nelson advised me to keep my thoughts to myself, sir. I guess it's pretty good advice."

"Found it out too late, didn't you?"

"I found it out." The boy was willing to admit that much.

"Why do you suspect Stone?" The question crackled like lightning.

"Just naturally don't like him."

"Why?"

"Dunno; just don't."

"Instinct, eh? Bad things to follow sometimes, young man,—sometimes not. Anyway, you take Nelson's advice and don't think out loud. Any time



you're tempted to, come here and do it. That is," he added, "if you've anything worth talking about."

Dumbfounded at such an invitation, Harvey looked first at the openly amazed Joe, then back at Mr. Mayhew's sober face. "Mr. Nelson told us to come to him with anything we heard," he stammered.

"How many people have you told that to?" demanded the man sharply.

"No one, sir." It was Joe who answered this time.

"What else did he tell you?"

"I don't want to be rude, Mr. Mayhew, but, if you want an answer to that, you'll have to get it from Mr. Nelson."

"Is that so! How about Harvey's telling me? I think his instinct's working again and telling him he can trust me."

Harvey Foster grinned — a thing he had never expected to do within half a mile of the old boss. "The old instinct's right on the job," he said, "but it's sorter telling me, sir, to be a human clam."



“ Mean you don’t trust me, either? ”

“ Mean you know a heap more about a lot of things than we two boys will ever guess, sir.”

“ Umph! ” The old gentleman glanced keenly from one to the other. Then, to the surprise of both, heaved himself out of his chair, strode across the room, slammed the door and returned to his desk, a new and decidedly puzzling expression on his face. “ Said you didn’t want to hear what I told Nelson about Boy Scouts,” he began. “ Glad you don’t. It was wrong. Might have known I was, or my own boy wouldn’t be mixed up with you youngsters.” He sat down heavily and picked up a paper knife, bending it between strong fingers as he talked.

“ Will you go to Mr. Stone and apologize, Foster? ” he asked abruptly.

“ No, sir.” There was no mistaking the positiveness in the boy’s tone.

“ Not if I ask you to? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Why? ”





“ PICKED UP A PAPER KNIFE, BENDING IT BETWEEN STRONG FINGERS AS HE TALKED ”







“ ‘Cause I won't go back on what I said, for one reason,” Fat stated, “ an' 'cause I won't do some-thin' for you I wouldn't do for my father and mother.”

“Umph! Do it if I convince you it's necessary to your country that you do so?”

“ Yes, sir.” The answer came like a flash.

“ Good! Sized you up that way. Not going to ask you to do it, though. Wanted to try a little experiment.”

Foster's face grew red. “ That wasn't necessary, sir,” he said gravely.

“ Maybe not. Didn't do any harm; sorter cleared the air. When we get talking about our country, some of us understand each other a heap better these days. I'm an old man, sort of a crank, maybe. Can't fight myself. Only good enough to make things for real men to fight with. Try to do my bit my own way. Need help, though. All of us need help. Country needs all our help. Got to win the war.”

“ We're going to win,” declared Joe.



"Of course. Can't do it by saying so, though. Huns think we're just boasting. Don't want us to do anything else. Don't intend to let us do anything else. Going to fool 'em. But," he declared, "we can't fool them by guessing or talking or following instincts. You boys trust Nelson; will you trust me, if I give my word that I've as much right to know things as he has? Only my word, mind you. My word and no questions."

"Sure!" agreed Harvey promptly.

"Yes, sir," stated Joe, with equal heartiness.

There was no mistaking the old boss's pleasure at their quick consent. One would have thought that the Mayhew word was being accepted at par for the first time in Gillfield history. "But it is only to Nelson and me that you are to go," he warned; "don't forget, only us two. And I want you to come to me at once with every rumor, with every queer story, with anything your instinct, your brains or your imagination hints that I should know. Especially I want anything which has to do with the plant or the men employed here."



"You mean we're to be sorter private detectives for you?" There was a thrill in Harvey's voice at the idea.

Mr. Mayhew chuckled in spite of the seriousness of his thoughts. "Call yourselves what you want," he replied; "all I want is results. Going to do it?"

"Rather!"

"I should say we were," agreed Joe heartily. "We've all wanted a chance to help."

"All?" repeated Mr. Mayhew.

"Eight are better than two," explained Joe steadily. "The other six fellows in the Wolves are just as loyal, and just as anxious to do their bit, as Harve and I. They want their chance; please let them have it, sir. Mr. Steve taught us lots of things before he went away. He'd say to take us all, I know."

"Umph!"

"Joe's right," asserted Harvey. "Eight's better than two."

Plainly, Mr. Mayhew did not relish the suggestion. "We'll begin with two," he stated, with



surprising mildness. "Better trust me entirely."

"We weren't doing anything else," explained Joe, eagerly. "We were only trying to help, that's all."

"That's all you think you were trying to do," retorted the man, with one of his rare smiles. "Have an idea, though, that you were trying to be unselfish. Good trait. Like you better for it. Call the whole thing settled now. You're working for me."

"Yes, sir."

"Anything more?"

"Guess not, sir."

"No, sir."

They began to edge toward the door, Mr. Mayhew watching them quizzically from beneath his bushy brows. Just as Joe put his hand on the knob, the man spoke. "What did you come here for?" he demanded.

"To get a Liberty Loan subscription," replied Joe promptly.

"Got it?"

"No, sir."



“Going without getting what you came to get, are you?”

“You said you wouldn’t subscribe for more, sir.”

“Oh!”

“Won’t you change your mind?” ventured Harvey.

“Never change my mind.”

Joe Lowell had learned to make up his own mind quickly and, for the last thirty seconds, an idea had been working there. He left the door and returned to the desk. “You’ve asked us to work for you,” he said steadily. “All Gillfield knows that you don’t like your employees to fail. We’re mighty near failure. If you don’t feel as if you could take the bonds yourself, will you give us some advice about whom to sell them to?”

The idea of some one’s trying to bargain with him tickled the old gentleman, but he hid his feelings to perfection. “Wouldn’t take good advice if you got it,” he grunted.

“Try us and see, sir.”



"Mean it?"

"Yes."

"All right. Buy the thousand yourselves."

Joe gasped; then that gasp turned to frank laughter. "I've promised to buy a fifty-dollar bond," he confessed, "and I've got to work all summer to earn the two dollars a week to pay for it. Fat's in the same boat."

"All right. You asked my advice; I've given it."

The boy, in spite of his confusion, caught the twinkle in the depths of the gray eyes. "How can we do it?" he gulped. "Tell us?"

"Might borrow the money for the first payment. Could sell your interest before the second was due."

"That wouldn't be playing fair to the United States."

The twinkle spread to a pleased smile. "Glad you see it. Thought you would. All right. Borrow it all."

"No one would lend it to us. Couldn't pay it back, if any one did."

"Working for me now?"



"Yes, sir. Do you mean that you'd — you'd lend it to us?" he blurted. "But we couldn't pay you, sir; honestly, we couldn't."

"Asked you to yet?"

"But — but —" Harvey wanted to say many things but couldn't find any words.

"See here," rumbled Mr. Mayhew, "you want to do something. I want to do something. Mighty poor business, your trying to argue us all out of it. Maybe I'm sorry for what I said about the Scouts. Maybe I'm interested in you because my boy's interested in you boys. Maybe I've another reason. That's my affair. Here's my proposition. Take it or leave it. Each of you subscribe to \$500 worth of bonds. I'll see that the payments are made. You deposit the receipts with me. We'll manage to keep up the payments. When they're all made, the bonds belong to the organization you boys and my boy belong to. They're the nest egg for a fund to start Camp Mayhew up in the mountains. Camp Stephen Mayhew," he added; "I'm not in this. But —" and he emphasized that "but" with a crash of his fist.



on the desk —“ those payments won't be paid if you boys whisper one word of what has been said here until I give you permission or —” and he spoke still more slowly —“ or if you have made statements which you cannot prove.”

Both boys were silent for a long moment. “It was too good to be real!” sighed Fat, mournfully.

“It's worth working for,” stated Joe firmly.  
“We'll accept. Thank you for the chance.”



## CHAPTER V

### A BLOW IN THE DARK

WHILE the rivals of the Wolf Patrol had done their best to bolster their hopes with much confident conversation, they emerged from that final Liberty Loan rally no very dejected body of lads. Saying that they were going to outdo the Wolves was such an entirely different affair from really doing it, that none had been grievously disappointed when Joe's quiet announcement had been made near the close of the meeting that his Patrol had exceeded their promised quota, and broken the Scout record. Nor were the Wolves of the type who publicly gloated over triumph.

But in private it was a different story. "Fine and dandy!" declared Nick Reed. "All of us knew Joe would do the trick, but none of us is going to play whale to that Jonah of a story. You two



couldn't get credit for a bag of peanuts. Who'd you hold up and rob?"

"Such crude methods are not for us, my son," returned Fat loftily. "We produced the dough. Let that suffice."

"Don't wonder you're ashamed to own up," Nick grumbled. "Would be, in your place. Only let me state one thing, now and permanently, you young Rockabilts make good on those monthly installments, or we'll make you look so sick no hospital'll let you in. Get that?"

"Save your little worries until we flunk out," advised Fat. "Your Uncle Harvey and Mr. Joseph Lowell are great men."

"Hope no one sticks a pin in you," comforted the still curious Nick. "You'd at least make a good explosion."

"Couldn't fizzle, even at that," Fat acknowledged, modestly. "If you're going to give us that vote of thanks, you'd better do it before I forget my speech. I've prepared it very carefully and it's a splendid oration."



"You'll talk yourself to death without any help from me," was Nick's only comment, made with a grin.

It was all the satisfaction any of the six got from Joe or Harvey on that or succeeding days. The boys had promised to keep tongue between teeth. That promise was sufficient, even without the additional promise of Camp Stephen Mayhew. To win that for their friends, they would have become deaf and dumb, if necessary, and would not have uttered a single protest on their fingers.

As the days passed they began to realize, more and more, how indefinite was the task set them. Like most New England towns, Gillfield was full of rumors. But, try as they would, the boys could find no international complications in the whisper that the Unitarian minister was going to be asked to promote himself to a larger field or that chicken-pox was rampant along the river bank. They wanted to prove to Mr. Mayhew that they were faithful to their trust, but they could not picture a dignified exit for themselves from his office if they



told him they suspected that the popular epidemic was German measles.

The keen edge of their nervous desire to be faithful would have been painfully dulled had they dreamed that the old boss had forgotten their very existence. He did not have to hunt his troubles; they had become very real and equally prominent. Yet there were few in the plant, and none in the town, who had the slightest suspicion that anything was wrong.

That first rejection of fuses was followed, within ten days, by a second. This time it was not the steel, but the measurements, which were at fault. Only a few thousandths too large, three days' product was declared useless, and the government needed every fuse it could get. The old boss paced his office, the ordnance inspector's rejection notice crumpled in his big fist, his rage gradually overcoming his sense of humiliation. At length he summoned Connelly, his own chief inspector. "What you got to say for yourself?" he snarled.

As Jim Connelly read the offered report, his face



slowly went white as his lips grew into a thin line.

"If them parts had me mark, they do be right," he stated.

"All go through your hands, don't they?"

"Yes, sorr."

"All get your mark, don't they?"

"If they do be right."

"Don't pass if they're not, do they?"

"No, sorr."

"These did." The old boss's statement was one of flat fact.

"Some mistake, sorr."

"Government doesn't make mistakes like this."

Connelly's square face whitened once more. "Fhorthy-three year, man an' bhoy have I worked for ye, Mister Mayhew, sorr. Is ut now ye call me a slipshod workman? Have ye one o' them fuses at hand?"

"Over there." With a nod, he indicated his desk.

Connelly strode across the room and picked up the returned sample from the rejected consignment. Carrying it to the window, he examined it with ex-



pert fingers and keen and careful eyes. "Th' marks be there," he acknowledge. "Th' parts was right when they passed my hands."

"They're not right now."

"Have ye proved ut so?"

"No. Told you I'd take the government's word."

"Oi take no man's word when th' name of th' plant is touched. Lave me take this to me room an' gauge ut."

"Bring your tools here."

Connelly nodded and strode from the room, to return in a moment with the tiny slugs and measures with which he worked. A moment more and he had the fuse apart and was gauging each piece with a delicacy unexpected from such great fingers. "'Tis right," he proclaimed at last; "'tis right to th' hair. Oi knew ut."

Once more each part passed the gauges, but this time long unaccustomed fingers held the measures. Mr. Mayhew's own eyes told him that his man was right. "Don't understand it," he confessed.



"Can't believe that there's anything crooked higher up."

"There is," stated Connelly forcefully. "'Tis proved."

"Looks so," he agreed thoughtfully. "Looks so." It was Mr. Mayhew's turn to pace the room in silence. He knew the men who were in power at Washington. He could not make himself believe there was anything wrong down there. He would far rather have suspected himself of being crooked than his country's chosen representatives.

"Jim," he said at last, "let's give 'em the benefit of the doubt, till we've got the proof. Try these under the master gauges." He went to the safe in the corner and, from an inner compartment, drew out a sealed and corded box. Ripping off the coverings, he drew the bits of perfect steel from their bed of cotton, then quietly handed the master set to the inspector.

Again Connelly picked up a part of the fuse. At the first trial his face turned color. The gauge rattled in the hole it should have filled. A half-smoth-



ered exclamation came through his dry lips as he grabbed for the second. It, too, rattled. Faster and faster he worked, Mr. Mayhew's face close to his. He laid the last part down with tender care. "There do be trickery here," he said in a hoarse whisper. "Me gauges have been tampered with."

Mr. Mayhew did not need words to confirm what his eyes had already told him. There was no doubt about it. Connelly's set of gauges were at variance with the master set. "Where do you keep yours?" he asked in a voice which shook.

"In me safe in me own room."

"Who's got the combination?"

"Me."

"No one else?"

"No, sorr."

"Ever find anything disturbed in that safe?"

"No."

"Watchman been regular on his rounds?"

"Dunno that. Best have Mr. Lowell in. He'll know."

"Don't want any one in yet. Fewer who know



this, the better. Some one in this plant's in German pay." He caught his breath in a deep, quick gulp. That anything connected with the Mayhews should prove traitorous was a blow that he could scarcely bear. He started toward his chair. Connelly saw him falter, waver and had an arm about him in an instant. "Aisy! Aisy! 'Tis bad, but ut will be worse for th' dirthy Hun."

For possibly two long minutes Jim Connelly saw a sight that no man in Gillfield would have credited. The old boss sat on his throne, a crushed and broken man; then, as unexpectedly as he had collapsed, came back into his own, head up, jaw thrust out. "Steve's got the easier part," he snapped; "he's going to fight in the open, but, by the eternal, I'll fight 'em in the dark and to the death! I was a man once, Jim! I've one more good fight in me yet."

"Ye have," agreed the inspector, the wild Irish fighting light sparkling in his own eyes, "an' ye've good men behind ye."

"I have," stated Mr. Mayhew. "I have. There



can't be more than one dirty Hun out there. Go back to your work and keep quiet until I give the word."

"But me gauges, sorr?"

"Umph!" Mr. Mayhew saw the situation, weighed the chances in a flash and made the decision in his old-time way. "Take those," he said, and pointed to the vital master set. "We know they're true. They're all we have; all that stand between us and a shut-down. They're in your keeping, Jim. I trust a man."

Connelly, better than any one, appreciated the full weight of that trust. His voice shook a trifle as he reached for the precious bits of steel. "Day nor night do they lave me, sorr. An' Heaven help th' man who so much as looks at 'em!" With that he turned on his heel and left the office.

But Mr. Mayhew, roused or unroused, was not one to leave matters to half measures. What he did was done on the instant and, it must be acknowledged, he felt a genuine sense of relief as he hung up from the long distance call he had put in. Above



all things, he assured himself he could be big enough to suspect none of his employees until the guilty one was proved guilty. But, in spite of his confidence in himself, he found that he was checking off name after name as the pay roll list ran quickly through his mind.

One name occurred and re-occurred, but he could not believe that a man whom he had treated almost as a son could play false. Yet of all in places of trust, Henry Stone was the only one of German birth. He appreciated that the time for sentiment was past, but, his faith once given, seemed almost too sacred to question. He recalled the visit made by the boys a few days before, but his own sources of knowledge were so far-reaching that he refused to put great credence in what he felt could only be a boy's personal dislike for a man of aggressive character. While still pleased with having enlisted the aid of the two lads, it must be owned that he counted on little of value being produced from that direction. Stone, because of the sterling work he had done for the Mayhew company, because of the quiet but



straightforward attitude he had assumed toward all Gillfield since the outbreak of the war, because, above all, of the injustice which might be done him on account of his chance of birth, must be the last at whom the finger of suspicion should be openly pointed. Time was essential in this thing; yet time would tell its own story. The old boss knew that he must play his cards warily.

His mind was still following such lines of argument when Stone himself came quietly into the office. "Can you give me a few moments?" he asked. "I've a rather personal matter to discuss."

"What is it?"

Stone, in his quiet, collected way, nodded his thanks and, closing the door behind him, walked to the side of the desk with a firm and confident step. "During my ten years with you, Mr. Mayhew," he began, "our relations have been of the pleasantest and for me you have done much. The time has come for me to attempt to re-pay, and I can best re-pay by severing my connections with the company at once."



The old gentleman stiffened. "What's the matter?" he demanded.

The expression on Stone's face did not change as he replied. "A man does not choose his birth-place," he said. "I believe it to be much more than probable that mine is an embarrassment to you. While I am an American citizen, there are those in Gillfield who doubt the place of my allegiance. It is uncomfortable for us both, sir, to say the least. You are working on a government contract; I am of German extraction. I am certain that the thought has already occurred to you, in view of what has happened."

"What's happened?"

"First, the finding of poor steel; secondly, this new matter of false gauges, sir."

"Who told you about the gauges?"

A trace of a smile passed across Stone's dark face. "One hears much when one's interests are at heart," he replied, ambiguously.

"Who told you?" reiterated Mr. Mayhew sternly.



There was no trace of a smile now and Stone's whole body stiffened. "If it was a thing not meant for me to know," he retorted, "Connelly was at least undiplomatic in his language as he took the master gauges into his room. I do not blame him," he added; "I myself am equally indignant that such trickery could occur under our eyes. But it is largely because such things can and have occurred, sir, that it seems best to me to remove at least one cause of suspicion. That is the reason for my resignation. I assure you that I am thinking only of you. I do not know what I shall do; I have no plans."

"Any one said I suspect you, or any one else?"

"No, sir."

"Any reason to think I suspect you?"

"I trust you know me by this time, sir."

"Any one in the plant said anything to cause this move?"

"I am not a boy, Mr. Mayhew. My honor is in my hands. I need no help in defending it. I am thinking solely and entirely of you."



The answer was so manly, the words rang so true, the man appeared so unselfish, that Mr. Mayhew moved with greater caution. "Who'd you recommend for your place?" he asked grimly.

"Young Cole might fill it."

"Inexperienced."

"Possibly," admitted Stone. "He's the best, though."

"Acknowledge you'd seriously embarrass me by quitting, don't you?"

"I'd hardly go that far, sir."

"Know it. Don't argue." He rose suddenly and placed a heavy hand on the man's shoulder. "Henry," he announced, "you're morbid. You've let what you think a lot of empty-headed people are thinking, get on your nerves. You're trying to do what you think's a chivalrous thing but you're so upset that you don't see that, by doing it, you'd do the very thing some one might hope you'd do, that's leave us in the lurch. There's no one here fit to take your place. Can't replace you. Go back to your work; forget that you're anything but a good



citizen. You've your part to play in the war. Play it."

Henry Stone looked his employer squarely in the eyes. "I know I've my part to play," he repeated. "I'll take your advice, sir; I'll play it to the end. I'll promise you that. And, above all, Mr. Mayhew, I thank you for your trust in me. It means more than you can appreciate. I wanted you to know where I stood. That's why I came to you at this time. I wanted to know where I stood. I know now. Thank you."

He wheeled and left the room, his head high, but the old man by the desk could not see the look in Henry Stone's black eyes.

Yet if Mr. Mayhew was determined to follow both inclination and advice and suspect none as the root of trouble in his plant until he was sure of his ground, he found his task more and more difficult. Nor did it add to his peace of mind to learn that the news of the substitution of the gauges was being whispered about Gillfield, in exaggerated form, within twenty-four hours. This in spite of sec-



ondary instructions to both Connelly and Stone that the matter should be regarded as a government secret.

It was to be expected that the boys, whose one idea now was to keep four ears as close to the ground as was possible, should hear these same stories. It was also to be expected that Harvey Foster should become highly excited while Joe counceled extreme caution about rushing into something he was confident that Mr. Mayhew knew far more about than any of the highly thrilled whisperers of sensational gossip.

Harvey, nevertheless, refused absolutely and utterly to remain dormant under the excitement. Insisting that Mr. Mayhew had asked, and expected, his personal aid, assistance and mental backing, he turned himself into a human ferret and started to round up all the various forms of current rumors. And, while engaged in this highly congenial work, the image of Henry Stone was never absent from his mind. Each tale he heard or overheard, he tried to trace its reason to a single source. Cer-



tainly none could accuse Fat Foster of being prodigal with his own suspicions.

Yet within thirty-six hours of his first plunge into what he told himself, in uttermost confidence, was secret service work, he stumbled into something which sent cold chills up and down his spine. Some one else was following the same trail. He was as positive of it as he was that he was alive, but he could get no glimmer of who it was, or what he was about.

For the first time in his life he kept his ideas to himself. It was not because he did not long for Joe's help, but because he had a very vivid belief that his friend would not wax enthusiastic over the fragments of decidedly circumstantial evidence he could produce. He needed help, he was in no doubt about that, but he was afraid to go to Mr. Nelson without something tangible and, the more he thought of visiting the old boss alone, the less that appealed to him.

He spent the major part of an afternoon trying to account for some of the strangers in Gillfield but,



when a small and thriving town is well served as to both train and trolley, this task is quite as much as a local police force cares to take in hand. The inn seemed his most promising field but, not being recorded as one of its paying patrons, neither Fat, nor his awkward questions, were received there with overdue cordiality. If he had only had a tin star on his flannel shirt, he felt things would have been more simple and more dignified.

The one bright spot in the whole gloomy afternoon was his re-encounter with the jovial bond salesman who, the day before, had admitted he was "from down Boston way," and who, with equal frankness, had asked the hotel clerk to get some one to show him to Mr. Nelson's office. Harvey, seeing his opportunity to do his daily good deed as a Scout, had promptly volunteered his services and had found the good deed a treat.

This afternoon Harvey saw this same chap getting off from the Kendallville trolley in front of the inn. He promptly edged more prominently into the landscape and was rewarded with a cheerful "Hello,



youngster! Still looking for tourists for your seeing Gillfield trips?"

Fat grinned. "Still ready to do anything I can for you," he replied. "Been to Kendallville? Bum burg."

"Any old place you can sell a bond, in these Liberty Loan days, is home, sweet home to me. If you're as good a guide to the ball park as to the bank, I'll treat us both to bleacher seats."

"No game to-day. We're not in any of the big leagues." Fat admitted, not stated, this.

"I've got to be amused." The handsome young fellow looked at the boy so dolefully, and his eyes twinkled so invitingly, that the boy's heart warmed more than ever. "I've got to be amused," he repeated, "and as you're the only chap I know here, you're hereby elected president of the Gillfield Entertainment Association, very limited. What are you going to do with me?"

"Want to take a walk?"

"I do not."

"Neither do I," agreed Harve promptly.



"There's a boat on the mill pond. We can row up the river; it's pretty."

"Any fish there?"

"Pumpkin seeds."

"Don't eat fruit. Come on."

"Better leave that thing in your room," suggested Harvey, nodding at the flat, russet leather case the man carried. "Boat leaks."

"Why waste time? I've got to go to that hotel soon enough. I'm generally called Jackson by my friends; what do yours call you?"

"Fat. Real name's Harvey Foster."

"Good enough! Come on and we'll take on that trans-Atlantic voyage. No subs around here, I take it?"

"No submarines but some Huns," replied Harve, falling into step.

"How's that?" queried Mr. Jackson, idly. "Shouldn't think a Hun'd find it healthy up in this part of the country."

Harvey turned purple. It was nice business for a detective to begin to babble of his work! "Guess



they won't find it healthy, even in their own country, when the U. S. gets through with 'em," he said. "I wish I was old enough to fight," he added, with a sigh.

"That's the spirit that's going to bring us through, Foster."

"How is it you're not in uniform?" blurted Fat. "I beg your pardon, sir," he added hastily; "that's none of my business."

Mr. Jackson was quick to feel the lad's real embarrassment and was sorry for him. "Why, that's all right, old man," he admitted; "perfectly natural question these days. I'm married and have a kiddie, so that puts me outside the draft."

"Gee! You don't look old enough. Bet you wish you were over there, though. My best friend's just gone to camp — Steve Mayhew, the old boss's son."

"So I've heard. Good chap?"

"Best ever. Runs our Patrol."

"Been running the Mayhew plant, too, hasn't he?"



"Been helping; but don't you get the idea that any one but the old boss runs that place. I know him; he's all right. My father works there."

"Does he, now? Hear they've had some sort of trouble with a government contract."

Harvey looked at him out of the corners of his eyes. "Have they?" he asked blandly.

Mr. Jackson's lips twitched, then a smile spread over his face and he laughed. "You'll do, Harve," he announced. "You sure know enough not to tell a stranger all you know."

Harvey again looked into the amused brown eyes. "Maybe a kid thing to say," he stated, "but I wouldn't be afraid to tell you what I knew, if I knew anything worth while."

"Thanks, old dear. But let me give you a little tip. If you do ever know anything you do think worth while, don't tell it to some stranger like me. Sometimes the most plausible people are the most dangerous, and the fellow who lets himself be pumped dry, isn't much use to any one he wants to be of use to. How much further is it to the pond?"



Harvey Foster, beginning to realize that he was about satiated with advice concerning his conversational abilities, was decidedly pleased with this open invitation to change the subject. Before they had reached the pond, he had discovered his new friend had rowed on a college crew, and that took a real worry from his mind. He had had visions of rowing that scow himself. He also found that Mr. Jackson knew all about the Scouts and was keen to learn about the activities of the Wolves. In fact, Harve was having one of the real times of his life.

During the two hours they drifted about the pond, he continued to enjoy life to the full. Mr. Jackson was far more fun than Stephen Mayhew had ever been. There seemed to be nothing he could not talk interestingly about and mighty few places where he had not been. Fat, whose one ambition had been to be an engineer on the Gillfield Branch of the main line, almost made up his mind to take up selling bonds for a career.

Once or twice Harvey was surprised to find out how much information his companion had picked



up about Gillfield and its inhabitants during his twenty-four hour stay. Mr. Jackson laughingly assured him that a good salesman learned his field before he began to work and that he had always been a great hand for remembering names and faces, which accounted for his knowing more or less about various Gillfield men whom he had been to call on before going to look over Kendallville. And Harvey, all unbeknown to himself, added a good deal to this store of local knowledge, yet, not once, did Mr. Jackson ask him a leading question or, apparently, twist the conversation into chosen channels. So it happened that, when they at last returned to the town, both were thoroughly satisfied with the results of their trip. Yet never had the name uppermost in both their minds been mentioned.

Harvey, in fact, was so enthusiastic about his new friend that, as soon as he had gulped his supper, he made a rush for the Lowell home to tell Joe all about it. "He's a king!" finished the enthusiast. "Come on down town and maybe we'll meet him and I'll introduce you an' everything."



"He doesn't want to meet me," vetoed Joe.

"Don't suppose he does," was the prompt rejoinder. "But, you bet your life, you want to meet him. He's a corker! Come on."

Joe let himself be persuaded because he really had no excuse for not going and, besides, it was always easier to let Fat have his way when he was in the clutches of one of his enthusiasms. But the trip was a sad disappointment to Harvey. He even ventured into the inn, hoping to find his new idol either in the office or writing room.

Neither of the boys were of the type which idles about the streets, either by day or of an evening, and both were rather uncomfortable at having no definite errand. So, while Harvey made a great show of hunting for his friend, that hunting was mostly ocular and the trail soon turned back toward the hill and home.

It was not quite nine o'clock. Heavy clouds had swept over the valley at sunset and the night was dark, now that they were out of the zone of stores, where arc lights gave place to the incandescents



which make feeble attempts to illuminate so many New England towns. The homes were set well back from the street and the newly-leaved trees cast heavy shadows. Had the lads not known every inch of ground, every tree and every shrub, almost every blade of grass, they might have felt the lonesomeness and silence of the night.

The street was one on which many of the older employees of the Mayhew plant lived — men who had spent all their lives in Gillfield and had built their homes according to plans given them by the old boss, who hated tenements and congested houses above all things. As the two strolled along, they were vaguely aware of a man walking alone an hundred or so yards ahead, but there was nothing about him or his surroundings to attract their attention.

All at once something happened there ahead which made them look, stop, clutch at each other for a frightened moment. The lone man had half turned. They had heard a half-choked roar as a second figure had sprung out from the cover of a maple trunk,



then a sullen, dead thud. And the man who had been walking alone crumpled down in a heap on the sidewalk while the other bent over him.

“It’s — it’s a murder!” gasped Joe.

Harvey, shaking like a leaf, opened his wide mouth and gulped for breath.

“Come on!”

Fat was no coward, but his legs were dead from the knees down. He reached blindly for a tree and knew he was going to be very ill. “Yell,” he faltered, “yell for help, Joe! He’ll get us, too. He — he —”

He had just sense enough to realize that his attempt at yelling “Help!” could not have been heard twenty feet away. Joe was dashing forward. It was enough for him to know that some one was in trouble. It was like him not to consider himself or give a thought to his very real danger. But Harvey saw it, and, pulling himself together with a great effort, sent a high, shrill “Help!” echoing through the street.

The murderer heard, leaped to his feet, saw a boy



flying toward him, hesitated a fraction of a second, then stooped once more to grab something from the sidewalk. Joe saw that it was a short, heavy club-like device.

“Help! Help!” screamed Harvey. “Help! Murder!”

Joe, at last seeing his danger, slowed up to weigh his chances. He knew that to rush in meant sure death, for he saw the man was powerful. A soft hat was pulled well down over his face and, while there was nothing about him the boy could recognize, there was something in his bearing that was strangely familiar.

Then, as the two seemed to wait a fraction of a second for the other to make a move, a fourth figure darted out from the shadows across the street. It all took but seconds; to the boys it seemed eternities.

The murderer was the first to hear the sound of the new-comer's rush. There was no hesitating now. It was no boy who had leaped out into the light. Joe saw his face, but he, too, was a stranger.



The man above the huddled heap on the sidewalk did not venture a second glance. "Come on!" he called, and, like a flash, vaulted the low fence and disappeared between two houses, the other following after.

Joe, too dazed by the undreamed of developments to reason, lunged ahead toward the man on the walk, his mind an utter blank. He had thought help was at hand, and that help had been a confederate. His one sharp, stabbing thought was that he could not recall a single descriptive feature of the second man. He had watched only the first man. He had thought the second a friend.

He slid to his knees beside the crumpled figure, and, at the first touch, his fingers came away warm and wet. The man lay as he had fallen — on his face — and the base of his skull was a pulpy, bloody wound. Slowly he rolled the body over. A faint, gurgling groan fluttered past the parted lips. By the glow of a distant lamp, Joe recognized the still, white face of Jim Connelly.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE OTHER STRANGER

JOE LOWELL, on the walk beside the man who had always been his friend, had only one thought. "Mr. Connelly!" he gulped. "Mr. Connelly! Are you dead?"

He tried to raise the limp figure so that he could rest the bleeding, sagging head on his knee. Vague memories of his first-aid training began to glimmer through the turmoil of his mind. He heard Foster's strengthening cries for help, heard the boy pant as, at last, he came ahead, but it seemed as if the peaceful, silent houses near at hand would never come to life.

Then, all at once, doors flew open and men began to appear. "That way!" Joe shouted. "They went that way — two of 'em! Quick!"

"It's Jim Connelly," muttered one man. "He's dead. Who did it?"

"They went! That way." The boy's only idea



was the capture of the murderers. "Two of 'em." He pointed between the houses on his left. "Quick!"

If the boy was bewildered, the man was thoroughly rattled. "Get a doctor," he ordered. "Call the police."

Another man rushed up, followed by a woman. "What's wrong?" he demanded.

"It's Mr. Pease," breathed Harvey. "Jim Connelly's murdered."

"Connelly!" Nelson's father was on the ground in an instant, his hand fumbling with coat and shirt buttons. "He isn't dead," he announced, a quick choke in his voice. "I can feel his heart. Run and break the news to his wife, mother; we'll carry him home."

Mrs. Pease had gone almost before he had finished. These two, at least, could meet a situation calmly. Mr. Pease turned to Harvey. "Go to my house and 'phone the police," he ordered. "Joe, who did this?"

"Don't know. Two men. One struck him.



Other was hiding across the street. They ran that way when they saw us coming. Won't some one chase 'em? Oh, won't some one come with me an' chase 'em!"

He struggled to his feet, but Mr. Pease, who was half-lifting Connelly, raised his own face. "It's not boy's work," he stated. "Here, Judson, you and Wells go."

The two men glanced at each other. The idea of chasing a brace of murderers through the night did not appeal to them. "The police will be here in a minute," said Wells; "I'll help you carry Jim home."

"I'm going," declared Joe, ashamed of Gillfield for the first time in his life and, in his own bravery, entirely overlooking the desperate possibilities of the chase. "Come on!"

"You stay here," Mr. Pease ordered sharply.

Down the street a front door slammed like a cannon shot. A moment later another figure came toward the group. Joe turned for help from this new source. For a moment he almost choked.



There was something about this man which recalled so vividly all that had just occurred that he felt as if the past two minutes were only a bad dream. The carriage was the same, the breadth of the shoulders was the same, but, instead of the slouch hat pulled well down over the eyes, the man wore a derby and, instead of the gray coat, a comfortable smoking jacket. "Oh!" the boy gulped. "Oh! It's Mr. Stone!"

As cool and as collected as Joe had ever seen him, Mr. Stone joined the group. "What has happened?" he inquired.

Three men tried to tell him at once, but his mind seemed to work faster than their tongues. "That can wait," he announced impatiently. "Connelly must be cared for first. I'll help you, Pease."

He, too, stooped over the prostrate man and, a moment later, the two lifted him tenderly and began the slow journey toward Connelly's home, a few doors beyond. "What has been done toward capturing the assailant?" he asked, as they turned into the yard.



"Boy's telephoned for the police. There were two men."

"Any one see what happened?"

"Joe Lowell."

"Can he identify either man?"

"Doubt it. Hope so."

"So do I," agreed Stone fervidly. "Careful, here comes Mrs. Connelly."

It was heart-rending, the homecoming of the big Irishman, but the clouds lifted a trifle after the doctor had made his first hasty examination. Connelly had a fighting chance, but the fight would be hard. The one savage blow had been well aimed and expertly delivered. Only Connelly's quick turn had saved his life.

While the physician was making his examination, Joe and Harvey were the chief figures in another. Gillfield's police force made up in sharpness what it lacked in numbers and neither boy had cause for complaint because of lack of action now. Chief O'Connor had the meat of their story in a flash, his men were started both on the now-cooling trail and



for the railroad station, and trolley routes while the chief himself led the boys back to the scene of what he believed must prove murder, rather than assault with intent to kill.

Both lads were old friends of his and he trusted them to the full. Appreciating that they were his one chance at a successful solution of the now growing mystery, he told them first to show him where they had stood when they saw the attack. For a moment he studied the situation, then turned to Harvey. "Go stand just where Jim fell, Harve," he ordered.

As Fat got out of hearing, he wheeled on Joe. "Give me the real story," he demanded.

"I have."

"Not all of it. We can both recognize Harve from here; you were even nearer. You could see both men better. I know, from your face, you think you recognized at least one of them. Which was it and who?"

"I never saw the one who ran across the street before in my life."



"All right. Who was the other?"

Joe stiffened. "I couldn't see his face. His hat — a soft black one — was over his eyes and his coat collar was pulled up high. It was a long, gray coat. But —" He hesitated, gulped, stopped. "I'd have sworn it was Mr. Stone," he stammered at last, flushing.

"Stone!"

Joe nodded.

"But he was there, boy! He helped carry Jim home."

"I know he did. I saw him come out of his own house. You asked me; I've told you what I saw and what I thought. I don't understand it any more than you do."

For a moment the chief thought rapidly. He could not believe the boy had real grounds for his suspicions and he had no idea, as yet, as to the motive for the crime. "It's a clew, anyway," he agreed. "We'll follow it. Come on."

Together they went rapidly down the street to the Stone home. Mrs. Stone herself answered the



imperative ring. "What has happened?" she asked.

"Some one's murdered Jim Connelly. Can I use your 'phone?"

The little blonde woman's blue eyes grew round. "Have they caught the man?" she asked, her hand clutching nervously at her throat.

"No, ma'am. Joe, call up the station and tell Donovan I want him here on the jump."

The boy went into the room Mrs. Stone indicated and put in his call, although he had seen Bill Donovan disappear on the trail of the criminals not ten minutes before.

"Bad business for Gillfield," he heard O'Connor tell Mrs. Stone. "Connelly'll go out before morning."

"Do you know who did it?"

"Haven't much doubt about it."

"It's terrible, terrible!" she exclaimed. "And right before our house!"

"Bit further up the street," corrected the chief.

"Did you hear young Foster call for help?"



"That is what made Henry run out. We were in the sitting-room."

"Oh! Isn't that the sitting-room, there on the other side of the house?" he asked indolently, glancing around.

"Yes. We had the window open. It's a warm night. Mr. Stone had talked of taking off his smoking jacket. I'm so sorry for Mrs. Connelly! I was going over there, as you came."

The chief looked at her a moment quizzically. "Know she'd like your help," he said. "If you don't mind leaving us here, run along."

For the merest fraction of a second, he thought Mrs. Stone showed signs of hesitating, but, the next instant, her eyes met his unfalteringly. "I think that I had better go," she said.

Hardly had she gone before O'Connor was in the little sitting-room. He had not liked Mrs. Stone's answers, yet, if any one had asked him why his suspicions were aroused, he could not have answered. Certainly he had put small faith in Joe's suspicions. He had known Stone too long to be



ready to connect him with anything so crude as a street murder.

As he looked about the room he felt suddenly ashamed of even his vague suspicions. The window was wide open, just as the woman had said, and, by the center table were two comfortable chairs, knitting by the side of one, the evening paper dropped carelessly in the other. The whole story of the Stones' evening lay there before his eyes. "Darn a boy!" he muttered. "I'll be suspecting the old boss next."

He heard Joe in the hall and called him in. "Here's Henry Stone's alibi written all over this room. You've made a mistake."

"I'm glad of it," was the prompt reply. "I couldn't believe my own eyes. I didn't want to. Do you want me for anything else?"

"Don't know." Once more he glanced about the room. Nothing seemed in the least out of the usual. "Stone may be the Hun they claim," he muttered, "but he's sure no murderer. Come on."

"Where?"



"Got to try and discover the motive for this crime. Jim hadn't an enemy in the town, s'far 's I know."

"Don't you think we ought to tell Mr. Mayhew about this?" the boy ventured.

"Why?"

"Jim worked for him, for one reason. If you don't mind, I guess I'll call him up," he added quickly.

"Go as far as you like," was the careless reply. "Come to Connelly's when you're through. I'm going."

Ten minutes later the chief had his second sharp shock of the evening. As he was talking with the doctor in the Connellys' hall, the old boss himself stalked through the open door.

"How's Jim?" was his first sharp demand.

"He may pull through. He's still unconscious, Mr. Mayhew." The doctor, like all the rest of Gillfield, showed proper deference to the head of the community.

"Good! Make it your business he does. I'm



responsible." He turned on the chief. "Was he robbed?" he demanded.

"Don't think so, sir."

"Don't you know?" snapped the old man.

"Who'd rob Jim Connelly?" retorted O'Connor, flushing uncomfortably.

"I'm not telling you what it is your business to find out. Answer me."

"I don't know, Mr. Mayhew. I never thought of robbery as a motive."

"Never did have any sense, or you wouldn't be a policeman," comforted the irate old gentleman. "Fortunate thing a boy had gumption enough to send for me. Who brought Connelly here?"

"Pease and Stone."

"Who else touched him? Who put him to bed?"

"They did, I guess."

"Stop guessing; find out. Bring every one who touched Jim, or his clothes, here."

The chief was glad of an excuse to get out. Robbery as a motive for the assault was an entirely new



thought. Connelly was a man who had very little. The chief, knowing that pay day at the plant was nearly a week past, knew Jim too well to imagine that he had any cash in his clothes. He was almost on the verge of treating himself to a smile at the old boss's expense, when his memory came to his salvation. He darted up the stairs, his heart thumping.

Within the minute he was back in the Connellys' little parlor with Pease and Stone. "These two are the only ones who've been with Jim," he announced. "They got his clothes off."

Mr. Mayhew's set face relaxed a trifle but, before he could speak, Stone stepped forward. "Here's what you are looking for, Mr. Mayhew," he announced, offering a close-wrapped package. "It may have cost Connelly his life, for he protected your gauges instead of his head."

The old jaw sagged a moment, then the gnarled hand went out, seized the packet and dropped it in the pocket of the light overcoat. "How do you know these are gauges?" he asked slowly.

"Because I saw him do up the package and put



it in his pocket just before he left the mill this afternoon. His right hand clutched the package so tightly we had difficulty in getting it free just now."

"You took 'em as my representative, I suppose?"

"Naturally, sir. I was going to your house with them at once. None appreciates their value better than I."

"Some one evidently did — from what he tried to do to Jim," stated Mr. Mayhew. "O'Connor," he went on, "here's the motive for the crime. Some one knew Connelly had this package and risked murder to get it."

"Who knew besides you, Stone?" The chief was plainly dazed. If he had not seen the Stone home with his own eyes, if Mrs. Stone's story had not dovetailed so perfectly with all the evidence he had found, he would have thought he had his man. Yet, if Stone had risked so much to get possession of the gauges, he would not have offered them to Mr. Mayhew of his own accord and before any demand had been made. Common sense told him that the man was not to be suspected; yet, as he



watched him, cool and calm as ever, he would have given a year's pay then and there to have been able to snap his handcuffs around the thick, white wrists.

"Who knew besides you?" he repeated.

"If I knew that, I'd do the work you're paid to do," he answered insolently. "It's quite apparent some one should do it."

"Is it?" snapped the chief. "How comes it you're so cocksure the package is what they were after?"

"Mr. Mayhew is here, and any questions you may see fit to ask about his affairs, he may see fit to answer. Why you should suspect me —"

"Who said anything about suspecting you?" The chief's eyes narrowed and did not leave Stone's face for a second.

"I did," Stone stated coolly. "Your whole manner implies it and I will not tolerate it. Were it not for a matter which has nothing to do with this case, you would not have had the temerity to speak to me as you have. The fact that I was once a German national appears sufficient for every one in



this town to lay every questionable occurrence at my door. I'm heartily and thoroughly disgusted with such narrow-mindedness. Were it not for my wife, I would laugh at your rustic simplicity. But she is, unfortunately for her, supersensitive. For that reason alone, I demand that you go to our home, examine it and ascertain whether or not the evidence you find there does not prove neither of us left the house until after the attack on Connelly occurred."

"Thanks," retorted the chief with a short laugh; "I've already availed myself of that privilege." He thought Stone would resent the announcement. Again he was surprised. The man merely shrugged his shoulders, but, the next instant, he stepped close to the officer. "Then apologize," he ordered.

"I don't have to," retorted the chief with equal force. "I've certain rights and I keep within them. And so far as suspecting you goes, I've also a right to suspect you or any one else. Making formal charges is another matter. I've made none. After I have, I'll make any apologies necessary and I'll make 'em to whom I see fit."



"Enough!" commanded Mr. Mayhew. "Time to talk when something's been done."

The chief bit his lip. He knew that his job depended upon the old boss's pleasure, but his former uncertainty about Stone was stealing over him again. The man's whole attitude was so pugnacious that his keen sense of suspicion was aroused, yet, in spite of his desire, he could not find a plausible excuse to go against Mr. Mayhew's orders and force the matter further. If he could have, he was a man who would have risked his official neck on the instant, for he believed that he saw more possibilities in the growing mystery than Mr. Mayhew was yet aware of. And it was then that he made his second grave error.

He turned abruptly to the old gentleman, his face now set in its official and expressionless mask. "If you're satisfied that the gauges were the cause of this attack on Connelly," he said, "don't you think you're taking an unnecessary risk in keeping them in your possession over night?"

"Haven't said I was going to. You take it for



granted they're safe and get after the man who assaulted Connelly."

The chief's ears grew red. He felt this to be a direct reprimand. "I don't believe you would find fault with what has been done already, sir," he said.

"What has?" If there was curiosity in Stone's query it was well concealed in the openness of the sneer.

O'Connor looked him over from head to foot, the pupils of his eyes narrowing to pin points. "What you've learned didn't seem to please you; why wound your feeling further? I—" He stopped abruptly. The sound of heavy feet on the front porch made him leap to the door. The two in the room heard a low-voiced conversation, then the chief reappeared. "Got to get down town," he announced.

"What is it?"

"Can't say, yet, Mr. Mayhew. If you're going home, I'll either call you up or come up."

"Be up until eleven."

"All right, sir." He turned and ran out. But, as he crossed the veranda, he noticed two huddled



shapes on the railing. "You boys come with me," he commanded.

Both Joe and Harvey wanted to ask a thousand questions, but the nervous reaction from their experience left them strangely tongue-tied and they fell in behind the two officers in silence. As they passed over the spot where Connelly had been felled, Fat shuddered. "Suppose he'll live?" he asked.

"Hope so."

"So do I. Good chap, Jim Connelly."

"Best ever!"

"Has the chief pinched Stone?"

"Guess not."

"Think he's going to?"

"Doesn't look like it."

"Bet he did it," declared Harvey. "Bet, if he didn't, he was mixed up in it some way."

"Doesn't look so now. Chief thinks I was mistaken, I guess."

"Whatcher think?"

"Dunno," acknowledged Joe slowly. "Maybe I was mistaken."



"Don't you believe it!" insisted Fat. "That man's a crook and a murderer and a Hun, and I know it."

"You can't prove it."

"I don't have to prove it to myself. It's the second man who gets me."

"I saw him," returned Joe. "The more I think of it, the more I realize I got a good look at him. I'd recognize him anywhere now."

Apparently the chief's ears were wide open, for he half-turned. "Don't talk about that," he ordered. "You'll get confused, Joe, and I want an absolutely clear statement from you in a minute."

"All right."

They walked on in silence. Neither quite appreciated his importance, both as witness and source of information, and it was hard to keep still. But neither could think of a single other subject to talk about.

They came into the main street at last and turned down in the direction of the police station. The knots of men on the corners, the questions shot at



the chief — and left unanswered, in true police fashion — proved the news had already spread and that Gillfield was tingling with excitement. The lads themselves found it hard to keep their tongues quiet.

The walk seemed interminable. Each, for some strange reason, felt a queer sensation of guilt as he followed the two silent policemen through the town. Something made them keep their eyes on the sidewalk most of the time.

But, as they approached the inn, something made Joe look up. He stopped short. His eyes grew round. His mouth opened. His right hand clutched Harvey's arm. "Fat!" he whispered. "There! Look! It's — it's —"

"What's the matter with you?"

"There on the steps! It's the other man; the other murderer. I'd know him anywhere."

Harvey wheeled around. For a second he, too, was silent. Then he laughed, frankly and openly laughed. "Shucks!" he said, "you're crazy! That's my friend Mr. Jackson."



## CHAPTER VII

### STONE PLAYS A PART

THE argument was short and sharp. Harvey would not be convinced. This time Joe flatly refused to concede that his eyes had deceived him. He was as positive that the stranger, Jackson, was the man who had rushed across the street, and the man to whom Connelly's assailant had called to "come on," as he was that Jim was the man he had found stretched on the walk. In spite of Fat's protests, in spite of detaining hands, he wrenched himself free and tore after the chief.

"Quick!" he begged. "Quick! Come back! I've found one of 'em."

"Where? Who?" The chief was with him in a flash.

"Back there; Jackson."

"Come!"

They started together but, before they had gone



twenty steps, ran into Harvey Foster, strolling carelessly at the side of Mr. Jackson.

"There he is!" stated Joe. "I'd recognize him a thousand years from now."

The chief stepped up to the young man and laid a heavy hand on his shoulder. "I want you," he said gruffly.

To Joe's astonishment, Mr. Jackson did not even start. Instead of showing any confusion, he smiled a friendly sort of smile. "If you're Chief O'Connor," he retorted, "our desire's mutual. I've been waiting for you."

"You've found me." The chief was not one to be bluffed by any show of composure and, this time, he had absolute confidence in Joe's identification. His keen eyes had already noted the dirty shoes on Jackson's feet and he knew that Gillfield's walks could not produce such decorations. "We'll talk inside."

"I was about to suggest the same thing," retorted Mr. Jackson, with that same friendly smile. "Only let's get into the station." He saw Joe



watching him with wide, round eyes. "It's all right," he said with a chuckle; "you're not seeing things, youngster. We've met before this evening, but ours was what might be termed a passing acquaintance."

The chief admired gameness. "Wouldn't say anything I'd be sorry for later," he advised. "Anything you say will be used against you."

"Thanks for the tip. You're all right! But, honestly, I was afraid Harvey's friend's eyes would pop out of his head unless I made some sort of confession. I was a boy myself a mighty short time ago."

"You'll hang yourself in about ten seconds more," growled the chief. He led the way into the police station and threw open the door of his own office. "Guess you'd better come in, too, Joe," he said. "I want your story at the same time."

Jackson's smile slowly faded as he shook his head. "I'll talk, Chief," he agreed, "but I want to talk to you alone."

"I don't mind." Joe tried to make his voice



sound as if he had neither interest nor curiosity.

"Guess I'll run this," observed O'Connor abruptly. "In there, all of you. You, too, Donovan." This last to the square-faced policeman who had accompanied them from the Connellys'.

"I don't want to appear officious," began Jackson, "but —"

"Then get in there," ordered O'Connor. "I've no time to waste."

"Neither have I." This time Jackson's voice was sharp. His hand made a move toward the breast pocket in his waistcoat.

"None o' that!" snapped Donovan, springing forward. "Kape yer hands up, me bucko!"

Again Mr. Jackson's laugh rang boyishly. "This is beautiful, classic!" he gasped. "Chief, you search me. You'll find a concealed weapon in my card case. But you examine it."

The chief looked at him closely. "What's up?" he demanded.

"Find out."

"I will." O'Connor stepped in front of him,



ran his expert hand inside the waistcoat and drew out a flat card case.

“Left-hand side,” suggested Mr. Jackson.

The chief opened it, looked and the color began to surge into his big, honest face. “Why didn’t you say so?” he demanded.

“Wanted to. You wouldn’t give me the opportunity. I’ve tried to find you twice to-day. You were out. Is it all right? Am I still under arrest?”

A sort of sickly smile found its way across the chief’s face. “You are, until you get in there and light one of my cigars, Ca — ”

“Name’s Jackson,” he broke in, “Mr. James Jackson, bond salesman from down Boston way.”

“You boys wait with Donovan,” ordered the chief. “I’ll want you before long. After you, Mr. Jackson,” and he waved him into his office and closed the door.

“Well,” gulped Joe. “What — what — ”

“I told you he was all right,” triumphed Harvey.



"Who is he?" Both boys made the united demand on the grinning Donovan.

"Dunno," confessed that worthy. "Whoever he be, Chief found that concealed weapon loaded. He's some man higher up, that's sure. Come till Oi get me me poipe."

"But what," asked Joe, as he followed, "was he doing up there by Connelly's? That's what I want to know."

"Maybe ye'll find that out, me bhoy," comforted Donovan; "thin agin maybe ye won't. These birds don't be after tellin' all they know, not by a dum sight."

For nearly half an hour the boys sat behind the desk with the equally curious Donovan. Reports came in from time to time to show that the net thrown out by the chief was in working order, but none filling Joe's description of Connelly's assailant had, as yet, been enmeshed. It was when all of the waiting three had almost given up hope of ever becoming any wiser as to what wheels were revolving within mysterious wheels, that the chief stalked



into the room. "Both you boys come with me," he commanded.

They were after him like rabbit hounds and were led to where a more sober Mr. Jackson sat beside the chief's desk. "This," began O'Connor, "is the lad who ran in on the murderer, Mr. Jackson," he said, putting a hand on Joe's shoulder.

"You had plenty of nerve, youngster," said the man, getting up and grasping Joe's hand cordially. "Plenty of it," he repeated. "You took a big chance. It's a wonder you didn't get a crack on the head, too."

The boy flushed. "He ran when he heard you coming, sir," he explained. "I wasn't near enough to have him hit me."

"You would have been in a second more. You did a mighty brave thing."

"You bet he did!" agreed Harvey promptly. "All I could do was stand still and gulp. I've dreamed of trying to yell for help. Now I know dreams come true. Gee, but I was scared! When are you going to arrest Stone?"



"What makes you think it was Stone?" Mr. Jackson asked quietly.

The enthusiasm of Harvey Foster ebbed as quickly as it had risen. It flashed over him that, no matter how many lessons he had, he probably would never learn to keep his thoughts to himself. "Dunno," he answered glumly. "No reason, I guess."

"Do you think it was?" This time he turned to Joe.

"I don't know what to think," was the slow answer.

Mr. Jackson turned to the chief. "Can't you tell them it's all right to talk?" he suggested.

"Sure! Open up, boys. Tell him everything you know. He's higher up than me."

"But we don't know anything," retorted Joe, desperately. "I've told you all I know. I didn't see the man's face."

"Are you positive?"

"Yes, sir."

The man thought for a moment, then proceeded



on a different course. "Ever hear of any trouble between Stone and Connelly?"

"No, sir. Every one in town likes Jim."

"How about Stone?"

"I don't believe he's very popular," admitted Joe. "You see, a lot of folks, who rather liked him before the war, have sorter dropped him because he's German."

"You mean pro-German?"

"I didn't say that. I don't know."

"Do you suspect he is — you or any one else here?"

"I don't know much about what other people think," was the careful reply. "I simply don't like him."

"That wouldn't make you suspect him now, would it?" asked Mr. Jackson quietly.

"No, sir."

"Know any reason why he should attack Connelly?"

"No, sir."

"What do you know about Mrs. Stone?"



"Not much. She's only been here five or six years."

"Came from Germany to marry him?"

"They were married, I think, the last time he went home."

"Gillfield women like her?"

"I don't believe they do or don't," confessed the boy, at a loss to understand why Mrs. Stone should be brought into the affair. "She never goes much of anywhere."

"What do you know about her, Chief?"

"Never gave her a thought, one way or the other. She's quiet, just as the boy says."

"Good thing to check up all Germans in your territory, Chief."

"Stone was an American citizen when he married her," defended O'Connor. "She's as much of an American citizen as he is."

Mr. Jackson's lips closed into a narrow line. It was more than evident that he did not care either for the reply or the tone in which it was made. It was far from his wish to antagonize O'Connor,



however. He turned to ask Harvey something but, before he could speak, the telephone on the chief's desk buzzed. O'Connor reached for it and, for a moment, the three others listened to the conversation.

Then the chief hung up with a snap. "There goes our last clew," he announced grimly. "It was Stone talking. Mrs. Stone was running home through the back yard to get something for Mrs. Connelly. She found a slouch hat and a long, gray coat in the yard next her house. The man threw away his stuff when you were after him. Chucked it, doubled on you and made his get-away."

Jackson was on his feet, however, reaching for his hat. "If you've a machine here," he ordered, "get it out. I want to see where that chap shed his skin. I'm getting mighty interested in — a whole lot of things."

"Want me to come," suggested Fat eagerly.

"Guess not. Won't be anything exciting about it."

"We know those back yards," pleaded the lad.



Jackson, who was as much a boy at heart as Harvey or Joe, could not resist that look. "All right," he agreed; "come on."

"Thanks, sir," chorused the boys.

Waiting only while O'Connor gave the brief instructions he had returned to the station to put in force, the four went back to the scene of the assault. It was Stone who stepped to the side of the car as it drew up to the curb. "I presumed you would wish to know about this at once, Mr. O'Connor," he said, in his usual precise English, his manner, however, a bit stiffer than usual, for it was evident that his recent experience with the chief still rankled savagely.

"Do. Where'd you find 'em?"

"It was Mrs. Stone who discovered the garments," he corrected. "We will gladly show you the spot. As good citizens, we naturally wish this sorry commentary on Gillfield's protection cleared immediately."

Harvey, in spite of his hatred of Stone, chuckled at this open stab. But the chief himself took it



with outward calm. "Very kind in you," he said. "Lead the way."

Stone glanced questioningly at Mr. Jackson, as if expecting an introduction but, as none was immediately forthcoming, thought better of his unspoken request and, nodding to his wife, walked into the shadows at her side. Jackson said nothing, but his keen eyes were very busy, glancing here and there.

The two lads, tingling with expectation as they brought up the rear, soon discovered that Jackson had spoken truly when he promised them there would be little excitement about the trip. Mrs. Stone was unflustered as she indicated the spot, just out of the deep shadow of a high fence, and said the hat and coat had lain there.

The chief grunted. "Must have been in some hurry or he'd have thrown 'em three feet further. Couldn't have seen 'em till daylight, then."

If it was Jackson to whom he spoke, he was disappointed at receiving no reply. That man had left the group and, walking to the fence, had vaulted



over and gone half way across the next yard. Joe, curious, followed.

He found him pacing slowly over the grass, looking carefully to the right and left. Ahead was a clump of lilacs. Jackson, studying this, nodded. "He must have doubled there," he said, half to himself. "Probably hid there till I got by. Then he sneaked off safely while I went on across the garden. Thought he'd jumped that lower fence."

He paused and studied the whole situation thoughtfully. "Whose house is that?" he demanded; "the second one, down there?"

"The Stones'."

"Um!"

"I went in there," volunteered the boy.

"Know you did. Stand here a second." He disappeared into the lilacs to emerge a moment later. "All right," he said; "let's go over to the rest of the crowd."

"What do you make of it, sir?" Joe couldn't help asking the question. His curiosity was too keen to protect his manners.



"Dunno yet."

They found Stone talking with the chief who, noticing Jackson, waved to him to come up. "Looks like a clean get-away. Too much grass to find foot-prints."

Jackson nodded. "Whoever it was, went through three yards," he stated. "Did you happen to hear any one running, Mr. Stone?"

Stone looked at the stranger for a moment. "As I recall the period just before being fully aroused by the cries, I do recall hearing some one running across our yard and into the next. If I gave it a thought, it was only to think it was some lads at play."

"Um! Strange you should hear footfalls on the grass when you were in the house. It must have been a heavy man."

"Not necessarily. Our window on that side of the house was open."

"It certainly was," agreed the chief. "Which way did the man go, Mrs. Stone?"

"I didn't hear him, sir."



"That's a pity," confessed Mr. Jackson.

The chief was plainly confused. This new development upset his theories. All that he now had left to work on was a very vague description of a man and actual possession of a surprisingly old hat and coat. The exits from the town were as carefully guarded as it was possible for him to have them, but the man wanted might easily slip away, now that it was all-too-evident that he was clothed differently from what the watchers expected. Ahead, the chief saw only a long search through clothing stores as a possible way to identify the purchaser of the hat and coat. He took a flashlight from his pocket and tried to find footprints on the grass — but without success.

Joe, who for some reason he could not explain, found himself watching Mr. Stone. Yet Stone was as disinterested in the chief's search as was Jackson. A half-contemptuous smile began to wrinkle the corners of his mouth and, at length, he started toward the moving light.

"O'Connor," he said sharply, "I certainly am



under no obligations to assist you in any way, but I have interest enough in Gillfield, and especially in Connelly, to leave no stone unturned which might lead to the apprehension of your man. Do you care for any suggestions from me?"

The chief was bewildered enough now to grasp at any straw. "I certainly do, Stone. You've knocked all my theories into a cocked hat."

"What I have to say may not seem worth while. I'm —" He hesitated a fraction of a second. "In Germany," he went on coldly, "the higher police officials, when baffled temporarily by a crime, as you are baffled now, immediately reënact that crime under their close observation. As a general thing, it brings some new and neglected clew to light which leads to a quick solution."

"How do you mean?"

"You've the hat and coat of the criminal, the two witnesses in these boys; we're within fifty yards of the scene. Reënact it. You may learn something."

Jackson, who had strolled up behind Stone,



nodded. "All right," agreed the chief. "We can try it. Who will act the murderer?"

Stone gave an ugly laugh. "As long as you were generous enough to suspect me of being Connelly's assailant," he said, "I claim that honor."

Joe Lowell gulped. But, before he gasped a second time, Jackson's firm hand closed his mouth. "Come on, Joe," he said; "I'll stay with you."

"But — but —"

"Don't worry," said Jackson as he led him toward the street; "you won't see much to frighten you. But, if this is nerve and sheer bluff, I take my hat off to the chap."

"Who's to be Connelly?" they heard the chief ask of Stone as they came after. "I want to stay with young Lowell."

"Let the other boy play the part," suggested Stone.

"Me!" exclaimed Harvey in a shrill voice. "Me! And have you jump on my back and wallop me with a slug shot? Not in ten thousand years!"



"A German boy would have more courage," sneered Stone.

"You know 'em," flared Harvey; "glad to say I don't. Come on. But if you touch me, I'll kick the spots out of you."

It was Stone, not the chief, who made the quick arrangements and, as he walked up the street with Fat, he left a silent group behind him. Mrs. Stone had already disappeared, saying she must return to the Connelys'. Jackson seemed decidedly interested, Joe was too bewildered to talk, and the chief far too absorbed in what was about to happen to start any conversation.

They saw Harvey stop a few yards before reaching the tree beside which Connely was felled, saw Stone disappear behind it, heard him cry "Ready?" then saw the boy start stiffly and resolutely forward.

The next instant Stone's figure appeared out of the darkness, stood for a second, with upraised hand, behind the boy, then struck a blow which would have killed him had it been made with anything but an



open palm into empty air. "Do I fall down?" they heard Harve ask.

"Not necessary."

"How about it?" demanded the chief. "Does Stone look like your man, Joe?"

"No."

"Knew he wouldn't," growled Jackson. "This is all blamed nonsense, Chief. Let's get out."

"Wanted to prove something."

"Have you?"

"Guess Mr. Stone has to Joe."

"He's certainly taller than the man who struck Jim," confessed the boy, "taller and not so broad. I don't understand. But I still think — I've made a mess of things generally," he finished disconsolately.

"About the pursuit?" called Stone.

"He wouldn't know the man's trail," said Jackson. "He'll just ball you up worse."

"But that's the important part," argued O'Connor.

"I realize that," grunted the other. "I'm not quite a fool. Let's go."



“Where do you want to go?”

“Away from here,” retorted Mr. Jackson, in open revolt. “He’ll stage a circus here next and you’ll be the clown. I want to see Mr. Mayhew.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### IN UNIFORM

NEITHER Joe nor Harvey was asked to accompany the disgusted Jackson and the thoroughly angry chief to the Mayhew home, nor, later, were they given any hint as to what passed between the three men. They were well aware that the Connelly assault had created a sensation in Gillfield for, during the following days, both were the targets for hundreds of questions they either would not, or could not, answer.

It was, of course, common knowledge that the man who had made the cowardly attack on Jim was still at large. Public indignation ran high against the inefficiency of the police, and only the old boss's loyal backing prevented an outburst of popular opinion against O'Connor. If any one knew what steps were being taken to apprehend the criminal, he failed to take the curious into his confidence.



That Mr. Mayhew himself knew, none doubted. So rumor ran riot, but riot produced no information.

Both boys had been sworn to utter secrecy concerning their suspicions of Stone, so that the twenty-four hours which dragged along before Jim recovered consciousness were filled with expectation. But Jim, when he could talk, owned that he had not seen the man, that he did not even know what had hit him — so far as he was concerned it was all a blank.

As for Jackson, Harvey ventured into the inn, on his way to school on the morning after the crime, in the hope of seeing that mysterious actor in the drama. He was dumbfounded when told that Jackson had left Gillfield on the early train. Only to Joe did he impart his new-found knowledge and it puzzled the latter as much as it disgusted Fat. If ever two boys felt they were in the heart of a worthwhile mystery it was these two. If ever two experienced the sickening sensation of seeing the lights snapped out, it was this same pair.

But, because they could find no answer to what



had happened, it did not dampen their ardor for the hunt. Long and whispered conferences all led to the same conclusion. The attack on Connelly had a direct connection with the Mayhew contracts, therefore a vital bearing on Camp Mayhew. The way to the desired end lay before them. They were sure of that. But it was a way deep in shadows, blocked by seemingly impassable objects but a way to be explored at any price. Only one thing was changed. Harvey now had a loyal supporter in his suspicions of Henry Stone.

A dozen times, at least, they went over the ground covered by Connelly's assailant in his flight. It was the one point on which they could not agree. Harve was convinced that the man had followed the course which the chief declared was the only logical one for him to take; that he had leaped the Stones' back fence, gone through the adjoining yard and fled down the next street to a waiting automobile. Joe held an entirely different view and was more than amazed when the heretofore suspicious Fat would not listen. The second point that drove them to the



verge of distraction was what had brought Jackson to the scene at the psychological moment and who and what he really was.

At least one visible result of the Connelly affair was immediately forthcoming, although it was vigorously denied that there was any connection between the two events. A guard was put about the Mayhew plant and word went out that the buildings were a healthy place to keep away from, unless one had business there. It was the formation of this auxiliary force which, the boys thought, gave them their longed-for opportunity. Again they marched to the door of Mr. Mayhew's office and were ordered in.

"Umph!" exclaimed the old gentleman, a suspicion of a twinkle in the depths of his eyes. "Private detective force, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's just what we came to see you about, sir."

"Ha! Found out something, have you?"

"No, sir," confessed Joe. "We've come to see if we can't work out some of our debt to you."



“Don’t owe me anything.”

“You haven’t forgotten those bonds and Camp Stephen Mayhew?” Fat was plainly frightened at the thought.

“Had. Went a long way toward paying off that little score when you saved Connelly’s life.”

“But we’d have done what we did for any one.” Joe was the embarrassed one now.

“Would, would you?” The man glanced at him from under the bushy brows. “Guess you would. Tell you what I’m going to do. Half those bonds go into an envelope marked ‘Camp Stephen Mayhew, Lowell and Foster, trustees.’ ”

“Do you mean — ” Joe gulped. “Do you mean — ”

“Mean what I say; say what I mean.”

“Oh! Oh! Thank you, Mr. Mayhew, sir.”

“Don’t have to,” cut in the old gentleman. “You earned ’em. Thanks are not necessary for value received. What do you want?”

It was all either boy could do to control his joy. That half of Camp Mayhew should have fallen into



their laps in this way was beyond belief. Neither had given possible reward for the part they had played the vaguest thought. With a half interest thrust into their hands so unexpectedly, the whole seemed almost within reach. And, if Mr. Mayhew chanced to appreciate anything they had done in such lavish style, surely he must be ready to help them really earn the rest. In their innocence, they had not the remotest idea how many times over they had saved him that thousand dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds already. But the old boss was wise, even for his generation. He knew character when he saw it and he had not the least intention of spoiling these two lads by making victory too easy for them.

"What do you want?" he repeated, with a keen glance.

"But we haven't begun to thank you," Joe began all over again.

There was no mistaking the old gentleman's satisfaction over their enthusiasm, but it pleased him to seem to put it aside. "Thank yourselves, chiefly



Joe," he retorted. "Something brought you here, didn't it?"

"Well," agreed Joe, with a little sigh of satisfaction, "if you won't let us thank you, you've made it easier for us to ask for jobs."

"Thought you were already working for me. Aren't you?"

"We liked the sample so much," grinned Harvey, "we want a whole chunk. We've heard you were looking for more men for the new guard. We thought we could do some of the day work in spots where men might not be absolutely necessary. We're pretty husky," he rushed on, not making the set speech both had prepared to deliver as a dialog, "and we can do as we're told and we know 'most everybody and — and — everything," he finished triumphantly.

"You're in high school, aren't you?"

"Closes next week. We could surely begin work then."

"And most of the money we'd earn we'd turn back for the rest of those bonds," pleaded Harvey.



"We're Scouts and we know how to do as we're told."

"Umph! Parents know about this, do they?"

"No, sir. But they'd be only too glad to have us do something to help along the war. And we're too young to fight, you know."

"Thought your father didn't know about this, Joe. Better talk with him about it."

"He'll let me, sir; I know he'll let me."

"So'll mine," echoed Harvey.

"Talk with 'em first," ruled Mr. Mayhew.

"Can we say you'll give us a job, if they're willing?" thrilled Harve.

"Guess so, if they agree."

"When do we begin?" Fat was almost beside himself. He had had very small hopes of success. He was growing to enjoy these visits to the office. He wondered why he had ever been afraid of the old boss. If ever a town had gained a wrong impression of a kindly, genial, lovable old gentleman, Gillfield was that town and Mr. Mayhew was that man. "Missing a week of school wouldn't hurt me much,"



It was then that the old boss did the unbelievable. "But consider the school," he suggested, and chuckled aloud at one of the few jokes he had ever attempted. "Now go away; I'm very busy."

"Yes, sir. Thank you ever so much."

"Can't ever thank you for all you've done for us, sir. We'll be back right off to go to work."

It was Fat who made this promise. If ever a boy saw rainbows at all four points of the compass at the same time it was Harvey. A job would mean much to him at this time. Maybe it would even go far toward offsetting the still unpleasant atmosphere in the Foster home. But, even better, it would give him a chance to do his share toward winning Camp Stephen Mayhew for the Wolf Patrol. It would be the proudest day in Harvey's life when he could stand at Joe's right hand and modestly confess to the other six what they two had done for their fellow Scouts.

As they raced homeward, all they could babble was about the generosity of the old boss. Fat, loyal if nothing else, still believed that Joe had done



a great deal to deserve the gift, but Joe could not grasp the idea. He had only done his duty, and he believed that Mr. Mayhew was but concealing his generosity behind a convenient excuse. Neither speculated much as to the future, for neither had the least idea but that their parents would welcome any opportunity for them to play a little part in the war during their summer vacation. The asking of permission was a mere form to satisfy some whim of Mr. Mayhew's and anything the old boss wished, now and henceforth, they would both do blindly.

"Be up right after dinner, old top," promised Harve, as he turned into his own yard. "Won't take my dad three seconds to tell me to get on the job. Suppose we'll be given uniforms to wear? Bet the leather things on your legs are going to be hot in August."

"Suppose we'll have 'em? And pistols?" Joe grinned at the thought.

"Well," Harve hesitated, "maybe we won't get pistols. Guess I'd be more deadly with a rifle. But



we'll get uniforms, all right, all right. Say, won't it be great to salute each other!"

"Great's the word!" declared the excited Joe. "Suppose we can get jobs for the other fellows?"

"Sure! After we've made good. Mr. Mayhew will do anything for us. We'll tackle him about that about day after to-morrow. Hi, Hec!" The yellow peril of Gillfield came dashing across from Tug's back door and proceeded to risk many dire and contagious diseases by licking Fat's good right hand. "Bet we can train him to be a police dog," Fat said, in an awed voice. "That would give us a terrible stand-in with the old boss."

"Shut up! Here comes Tug. We can't let him know yet."

"Say, where you fellers been?" Tug gulped twice and the last half of his luncheon was at rest. "Been looking for you. Nick wants to get up a game of scrub this after."

"Nothin' doin'! I've got a date."

"Oh, quit tryin' to be mysterious, Fat! You're queering yourself."



"That's my hard luck!" was the unsympathetic retort. "Guess my feed must be ready. See you later, Joe." With that he stalked into the Foster home with what he believed to be a military stride.

Tug looked at the always friendly Joe. "What's doin'?" he asked. "Tain't like Fat to be swelled all out of shape over nothin' a-tall."

Joe, who was fonder of the little fellow than most of the other boys, was quick to catch the hurt note. One arm went over Tug's shoulder. "Harve doesn't mean it that way, Tuggie," he said. "He's just excited, that's all."

"I know that. But ever since you two fellows saved Jim's life —"

"We didn't," Joe declared promptly. "We just happened to be there, that's all. You'd have done just what we did."

"I would not. I'd be running yet. I suppose it's all right, though. But we fellows sorter miss you two, Joe."

Joe knew this criticism to be unjust. He had not neglected the Patrol nor had he kept aloof from the



main body of his friends. Not as much of his time had been his own, that was all. If Tug only knew about Camp Stephen Mayhew, he would never have made such a charge. Joe was sure of that. "Sorry you've missed me," he said, "but, honestly, I don't see how you've had time to. You may, though."

"What do you mean?"

"I may go to work."

"You! Where? When? Oh, gee!" Tug sounded envious.

"Can't tell you more just yet, old fellow. It's still a secret. But I've as good as got a job for the summer — maybe longer. But that's a secret between us two."

"For how long?"

"Till I tell you."

"Does any one else know?"

"Only Fat."

"None of the rest?"

"Not one of 'em."

"You bet I won't tell!" stated Tug, almost as puffed up as Harve, now that his idol had confided a



real, vital secret to him; "you bet I won't tell. You can trust me."

"Wouldn't have told you, if I hadn't known that," laughed Joe. "I've got to rush along to dinner. See you later."

"I'll be hanging round here," promised the busy Tug. "Hec saw a cat here yesterday; he likes this place. So long!"

"So long!" Joe went on up the street, whistling cheerily, more than pleased with the world in general and the way it was treating him.

He went into his own house, the whistle growing less shrill but more triumphant. He wanted to see his mother and break the good news to her. That she could consider it anything but good news, never occurred to him. Nor had he the slightest doubt as to how his father would receive his request for permission to go to work. All that puzzled him in any way was Mr. Mayhew's insistence that the paternal consent must be forthcoming before the actual details were settled.

He had expected to find his mother in the dining-



room. She always went there a few minutes before Mr. Lowell arrived home, to make sure everything was ready. But, as he started down the hall, he heard his father's voice in the sitting-room. There was something in its tone which would have made the boy stop, even were it not for the surprise of finding him at home before half after twelve. Joe, from whom his parents had few secrets, turned through the half-opened door.

But he stopped on the threshold. Everything told him something had happened. His father stood by the center table, a telegram in his hand, his face glowing with excitement. But over by the window, her back to the room and her shoulders bowed, stood his mother, her handkerchief crumpled into a tight little ball with which she dabbed at her eyes. "I know I'm a coward and a slacker and everything contemptible," he heard her gulp, "but you mean so much to me, Jack."

"Don't be foolish, Mary. It's only Washington. Even if I should go overseas, I wouldn't be taking any more chances than thousands of others are



taking. It's war. We've all got to make sacrifices, and ours is a mighty small one."

"Father!"

The man wheeled around. "Hello, Joe!" he cried. "How do you think your old dad will look in a uniform?"

The boy's eyes grew round. He didn't comprehend in the least. The only thing he did understand was that something was paining his mother. Instinctively he sidled across the room until he felt his hand in hers. "I don't know quite what you mean," he confessed slowly, "but I think I'd like it."

"Oh, Joe!"

"So would you, mother," he said. "Dad would look splendid. And be splendid, too."

For a moment she gazed at her son, then her free hand swept out in a little sign of surrender. "My men are against me," she said, with a brave smile; "what can I do?"

"Keep on smiling," declared Mr. Lowell, his arm about her. "I knew you'd see it in its true light."



"I suppose I must. I guess it was the way you broke the news to me. I'd never thought of their taking you. I hadn't thought that the war'd hit me, too."

"It's going to hit most of us before it's over," he replied soberly. "I should have told you in an easier way. I was excited and, of course, surprised."

"You shouldn't have been," she stated loyally. "They've got to have you. They can't get along without you and you know it."

Joe, beginning to think that life was just one mystery after another, found his tongue. "What's happened?" he asked. "Who's taken dad? Not the draft?"

"Too old for that, sonny. 'Fraid neither of us can shoulder a gun in this war. But I've been offered a majority in the Ordnance Department. Mr. Mayhew wants me to accept. Says it's every one's duty to do anything the government asks."

"Whew!"

"But he can't get on without you, Jack. You're



more than his right hand man now that Steve's gone."

"He's the gamest old thoroughbred who ever snorted flame," declared Mr. Lowell enthusiastically.

"He wouldn't listen to that part. Said he was able to do my work, too. Said he supposed he'd have to do every one's work until the government decided it really needed the good men and ordered him overseas. And he'd go, too," he declared; "he'd go, and he'd keep going, as long as there was a Hun left to chase."

"When are you going?"

"I'm ordered to report within ten days of accepting my commission, Joe. I imagine the sooner the better. They must need men, to send for me this way."

"Don't try to belittle yourself," commanded Mrs. Lowell, her head up. "You know they need you for special work and that they've picked you because you're the best man there is. It's going to be rather hard for Joe and me, though, behind in Gillfield. But we'll be good soldiers, too, won't we, son?"



"Of course we will, mother."

"Who said you were going to stay in Gillfield?" demanded Mr. Lowell. "You're coming to Washington just as soon as as I can find a place for us to live."

"Oh!" Joe's exclamation was thoughtful. "Oh! That's what Mr. Mayhew meant when he said I'd have to see you before he could offer me a job. He knew about this all the time."

"What job? What have you been doing?" asked his mother.

"Harve and I asked Mr. Mayhew to let us be day guards at the plant."

"But you're only children," she cried.

The father glanced at the sturdy son and his eyes sparkled. "Pretty healthy specimen of a child," he chuckled. "Perhaps you can get a job in Washington, Joe. You'll miss Gillfield."

Miss Gillfield! He'd never dreamed of leaving Gillfield before. The idea staggered him. He had never lived anywhere else. All his friends were here. It meant transferring the treasured leadership



of the Wolf Patrol to some one else. It meant leaving Harve for an indefinite time. It meant — everything. Already his heart was set on really working for Mr. Mayhew, really earning money toward paying for that other five hundred dollars' worth of bonds which would make Camp Stephen Mayhew a reality, not a vivid dream. He wanted time to adjust himself to these new conditions.

Then he caught a glimpse of his mother's face. All her life, too, had been spent in Gillfield. Ever since her marriage she had lived in this house. But there was no twitching of the sweet lips, no hesitancy in the big blue eyes, only trust and faith and loyalty as she looked up into her husband's face. Joe caught his breath with a quick, sharp gasp.

"You're commanding officer, Major," he said, with a little laugh. "We're going to do just as you want us to do."



## CHAPTER IX

### A HUNCH AND A THEORY

THE two weeks which followed Major Lowell's departure were like a rushing, whirling dream to Joe. The thought that he might go to Washington was always uppermost in his mind and it had become so fascinating that he quite refused to believe he really would go, for, should the unforeseen happen, he knew the disappointment would be all the keener.

Harvey was left dumb by the news. To him there was no more question about Joe's departure than about his conviction that the end of the world was close at hand. Never had he considered being separated from his life-long friend. Even going to work at the Mayhew plant failed to lift him from a vivid case of blues. Half the fun was out of the job now that Alex Cotton had taken the place Joe had asked for. And the fact that they were armed with whistles, instead of rifles, was a bitter blow.



In fact what, to them, was the certainty of Joe's departure took all the joy out of life for the whole of the Wolf Patrol.

Yet, with all there was to keep him busy, Joe found much time to speculate about the inertia of Chief O'Connor. No apparent effort was being made to solve the Connelly mystery. It was as if the whole affair had been forgotten as quickly as the unknown man had disappeared into the night. Nor was the boy the only one dissatisfied. Connelly had far more friends than enemies in Gillfield and criticism of the police was as open as it was caustic.

Fat and Joe discussed the identity of Mr. Jackson time after time. They were as puzzled over this as they were over his disappearance. As for his connection with the affair, and especially as to why he should have chanced to have been across the street when Jim had been struck down, that was utterly beyond them. Of only one thing were they confident; it had not been mere coincidence.

Harvey, whose curiosity was as hungry as his stomach, did his work as a day guard in the factory



yard with his eyes on every one who passed and his big ears spread wide to catch any whisper from within. Nothing could shake his belief that the German General Staff had centered its whole plan of campaign about the destruction of the Mayhew plant. But Joe's inability to identify Stone as Connelly's assailant during that hastily staged bit of near-melodrama, had bewildered his heretofore stubborn young mind. Yet Joe, as he thought the whole affair over and over, became more confident that his first impression was a fairly good one.

It was Harvey-of-the-Ears who, one evening, rushed up to the Lowell home and stood whistling like a whooping crane under the dining-room window until Joe's head appeared. "Come on in, Harve," he commanded, "and stop that racket."

"Took you long enough to come to life," observed Fat, disgustedly. "Come on out; I've something mighty important to tell you."

"Come in and tell it."

"Can't. It's mighty important."

"If that's Harvey," came Mrs. Lowell's voice



from the table, "tell him to come in and have a piece of chocolate cake."

Harvey heard that message and, for a second, his soul thrilled. But the next, his head shook. "I'll wait out here," he answered sternly. "Come's soon as you can."

Joe, who was now sure that it was at least the old boss who had been found with his throat slit, bolted the rest of the meal and the house. "What is it?" he demanded as he dashed around the corner. "Has the chief made an arrest?"

"Chief nothin'!" snorted Fat. "O'Connor's a dead one!" He caught his friend by the elbow and led him toward the secrecy of an apple tree. "Mrs. Stone's vamoosed," he stated excitedly.

"What do you mean?"

"Disappeared," he repeated; "vanished, beat it."

"How do you know?"

"Well, for one reason, I saw her going toward the station with a bag and shadowed her. For another I saw her get on the evening train. For the third, I saw the train go. For a fourth, I saw



her sitting in a window as it went. Want any more, you bonehead? ”

“ Doesn’t hit me as especially mysterious,” confessed Joe, thinking of the piece of cake still on his plate.

“ Doesn’t, doesn’t it? Too bad! ” Harve’s voice was a mixture of pain and deep, deep sympathy for such stupidity. “ Let’s begin at the beginning,” he said, with a patient sight. “ Ever know her to go away before? ”

“ Never knew much about her, one way or the other.”

“ Answer the question.”

“ Have.”

“ All right.” He sighed hopelessly, as if a long and painful explanation lay ahead. “ I just dropped into the Connellys’, sorter careless-like, on my way up. She’s been chummy with Mrs. Jim ever since Jim’s been done up. Mrs. Connelly didn’t know she was going away. Make anything of that? ”

“ Might have been called away,” suggested Joe. “ Maybe some of her family’s sick.”



"Guess all of 'em are everlastingly sick an' going to be sicker. They're in Hunland. I tell you somethin's beginning to get ready to be doing. You weren't so blamed wrong when you said it was Stone who beaned Connelly. They're getting ready to do a get-away and they're not going together."

"You're seein' things," came the comforting answer.

"Am, am I? I tell you, there's somethin' doin'. I know. The chief was down to see the boss this after. Had a stranger with him. They were in the office almost two hours. How's that?" he demanded, stuffing his hands into his trousers pockets and looking at his friend triumphantly. "How's that?" he repeated.

"Don't see what on earth that's got to do with Mrs. Stone."

"Neither do I, yet. But it has. It's our business to find out."

Joe smiled. "Even if we know the chief had some real clew, I can't see how it would lead to Mrs. Stone," he said. "It was a man who hit Jim. All



Mrs. Stone has done is to help Mrs. Connelly every way she could. Everybody knows that."

"Then why did she fly the coop?" insisted Harve. "The minute the chief shows up with a stranger, and goes into session with the boss, why does she fly the coop? Answer me that? I ask you!"

"How should I know?"

"Exactly," agreed Fat, as if a great weight had been removed from his over-burdened shoulders; "how should you? You should, but how? That's why I came to you right off. We've got to get to work. Mr. Mayhew will expect it of us."

"Expect what of us?" Joe was rapidly losing, not only his patience, but his reasoning powers. "Have you been standing in the sun all day?"

Fat ignored the implication. It was no time, he thought, to be frivolous. "Mr. Mayhew will expect us to slip him this info. immediately," he said pompously. "Do you suppose he'll think it worth giving us that other five hundred dollars' worth of bonds for?" he asked, in sudden excitement.

"More apt to think it's worth a trimming for



disturbing him," grunted Joe. "Let's hunt up the rest of the crowd. We ought to have a meeting of the Patrol. If I'm going away, I want to turn over the leadership to some one else."

"No one's keener about the Wolves than I am," stated Harvey, "but you're on the wrong track. If you want to do the Patrol a good turn, come on over to Mr. Mayhew's till we cinch that camp. I know what I'm talking about."

"You can't prove it by me," Joe commented. "You're dotty, and all you'll get over there at the big house will be one fine, young call-down. You'll go over there and gum the whole thing."

Fat gazed at him a long minute, his round face despondent. "Joe," he mournfully acknowledged, "you've a pile more sense and 'most always you're right about things. Most of my life I've done about as you've asked; won't you do as I want, just this once?"

Joe didn't stop to analyze anything further. What Fat had said was more than true. Even if the old boss did storm them out of the house it was



as nothing compared with such loyalty. "Sure, I'll go!" he agreed on the instant. "I didn't know you felt that way about it."

"I do," confessed Harvey stolidly. "It's the first real hunch I've ever had and I want to play it straight through the ninth inning. I'll take all the blame."

"We'll divvy, as per usual," said Joe, with a smile. "Come on, old Herlock Sholmes."

"Hurry up, then."

Fat, in his eagerness, made a break for the hedge which separated the big Mayhew place from the Lowells' small one. "Come back here!" ordered his friend. "We'll go round, and not start in wrong by smashing a hole in that thing. If we haven't anything else, we've plenty of time."

"Have it your own way." Fat tried to be very generous, although far from being in agreement. Time, according to his ideas, was one of the very few things they didn't have. That "hunch" was getting stronger every minute and the temptation was to humor it. Nevertheless, he started for the



street and the round-about away. But his pace was like that of a blood-hound in full cry.

"Want to get there so winded you'll gasp like a fish?" called Joe. "Ease up, Harve! What are you goin' to say?"

Fat skidded through the front gate before applying the brakes. "Why," he retorted placidly, "you're going to do the talking."

"I told you that hunch wasn't good for anything."

"Do you mean you won't?"

"You bet!"

"Oh, gee! Say, Joey, quit foolin'! Sure, you're going to do the talking. You always do."

"This is your party," came the firm answer. "I'm just tagging along and backing you up."

For once in his career, Harvey Foster surprised the friend of his bosom. "All right," he agreed, "I'll talk. It's worth the chance. But you kick my shins, if I get burbling."

"I'll promise — and I'll be busy. But you remember you asked me to, and don't be sore after we get thrown out."



"You sure do give a feller a heap of courage," grinned Fat, finding it quite impossible to be serious all the time. "Suppose they're through dinner?"

"They won't ask you in for any dessert, if they're not. Sorry I made you come this long way, if it's bringing back your appetite."

Harvey merely snorted as they started up the long, winding drive. It was the first time either of them had been on the Mayhew place since Mr. Steve had gone and familiar ground brought back memories which made them quiet and just a trifle homesick. The dying light made the shrubbery and wide lawns seem more lonesome than ever, and, up above them, the big gray house looked stern and forbidding.

Even Fat's "hunch" began to lose its courage-giving powers when it came time to ring the bell, and it was Joe who had to ask the maid if Mr. Mayhew was at home. Harve had not only lost his voice, he would have refused ice cream, had he been invited into the big dining-room.

It was a very quiet pair who were ushered into a



small reception-room and left to twirl their caps with chilling fingers. At the end of ten minutes, Harvey tore his eyes away from the open window. "I'll go through that, if I look at it any longer," he confessed. "Suppose the old boss is going to sit right through and eat breakfast, too?"

"Looks so," acknowledged Joe.

"You do the talkin'," urged Harve, desperately; "my mouth's dry."

Joe started to refuse, but the imperative ringing of an electric bell in a distant part of the house made him stop to listen. It hardly ceased before it began again and kept up, even as the maid hurried down the hall. "I must see Mr. Mayhew at once, Mary," they heard a voice declare, in a tone which left no doubt as to the urgency of the need. Something was wrong.

"It's Mr. Nelson!" whispered Fat. "What's happened?"

The next instant Mr. Nelson entered the room, so intent on his own business that he did not notice the boys till they sprang to their feet. "Hello!"



he exclaimed, the frown deepening on his forehead.

"What brings you here?"

"Found out something we thought Mr. Mayhew ought to know," replied Harvey promptly.

"We've been waiting some time to see him."

"What is it?"

Harvey hesitated but, before he could quite make up his mind to share his secret with the Scout Commissioner, Mr. Mayhew stalked into the room.

"Well, George?" he demanded sharply.

Mr. Nelson nodded a quick greeting and his brows went up questioningly as he looked across at the two lads.

"What they don't know, they're clever enough to suspect," the grim old man replied to the unspoken query. "I trust 'em. We may need 'em. Wisdom from mouths of babes and fools. I've been a fool. What is it?"

Mr. Nelson took a quick, long breath and it was evident that what he was about to say hurt every fiber in him. "Young Dick Hunt, our assistant teller, has made a mess of things," he stated. "If



he had a grain of intelligence, I'd say he was a crook."

The boys gasped. They had known Dick all their lives.

"Well?" The old boss's voice was insistent.

"I'd ordered them all to tell me the instant Stone applied to get into his safe deposit box. Crocker went to luncheon when I did, leaving Hunt in charge of the vaults. Mrs. Stone came in, asked him to help her open their box, and he did. Says that I didn't give any orders about her and that's why he didn't tell me about it. Only found out by accident."

Mr. Mayhew emitted something so akin to a roar that Harvey jumped. "Have you notified O'Connor?" he demanded.

"Yes."

He stopped half way in his quick turn across the room. "Maybe we're in luck, for once," he said with a slight smile. "We can get everything at Stone's house now."

"That's what I thought. That's what I told



O'Connor and the Department of Justice agent. They're on their way there now. But I thought you should know immediately."

Harvey Foster had stood all a human boy could stand. He began to do that one thing Joe had warned him against. "You're too late," he burbled. "Don't know what she's got you want, but she's flown the coop with it."

"What's that?" The two men whirled on him and one of Mr. Mayhew's great hands gripped his shoulder till the bones threatened to crunch. "Say that again."

"She's flew th' coop," choked Harve.

"He means Mrs. Stone left town an hour ago," explained Joe, his eyes beginning to grow large as he began to appreciate Harve's "hunch" was a very important part of something he could not fathom.

"How do you know?"

"Saw her."

"Why didn't you tell some one?"

"That's what we came here to tell you, sir. We've been waiting twenty minutes to tell you."



"Which train? Quick!"

"Six-thirty."

"She'll change at the Junction for the Boston express. George," he commanded, "get O'Connor on the 'phone."

"Told you they were on their way to Stone's, sir."

The old man roared his rage. Just as the long and secretly planned trap had been ready to spring, stupidity had balked him. And he was not used to being balked. His eye fell on Joe. "Run!" he commanded. "Catch O'Connor before he reaches Stone's. Tell him to head off the woman by wire and arrest the man. Go!"

Joe obeyed. All he knew was what he could guess and piece together, but it all told him that it was Henry Stone whose capture depended on his speed and that he was wanted for more than assault upon Jim Connelly. Knowledge that the Department of Justice was taking a hand, remembrance of the mysterious Mr. Jackson, and this new matter of the safe deposit box, all bore out his belief that Stone was



not only a would-be murderer but that his motive was the crippling of the Mayhew plant. He ran as he had never run, for he believed now that, alone and in the dark, he had dared rush in on a German secret agent and that he was now going to play a part in his capture. O'Connor's inactivity was explained at last. The Connelly case was only a link in a plot which the government authorities had been watching develop until it was ripe to pick.

As he sped down the hill, he heard the sound of an automobile coming up. It stopped before the Stones'. Two men leaped out. With a final sprint, Joe threw his arms about the startled O'Connor and clung to him while he panted. "Arrest him!" he gasped. "Mr. Mayhew says arrest him."

"What is it? What's happened?"

"Never mind." It was the stranger who spoke. "Mayhew says act; act."

The chief, who had been king in his own kingdom for years, was growing thoroughly sick of being a mere taker of orders. "I will, when I know more about it," he grumbled.



"You know this boy?"

"Yes."

"He's straight?" The questions came like shots from a machine gun.

"Yes."

"Then act."

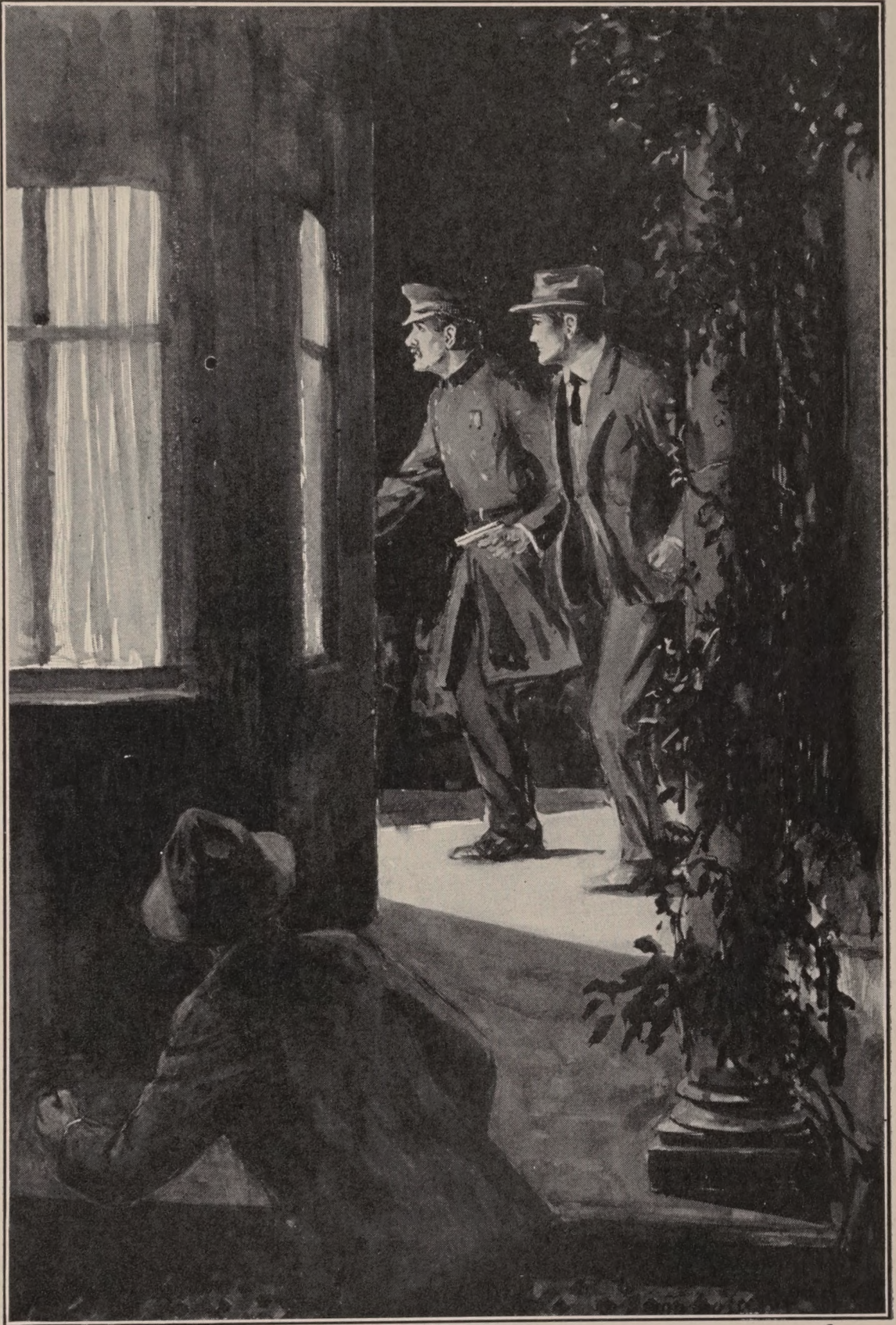
The chief saw his official life coming to an abrupt conclusion if he hesitated another moment. He also saw much glory ahead, if he could capture Stone and capitalize the act. "Let's go!" he said, and started for the house.

Joe thought he was included and ran along at his heels. "Go back, youngster," commanded the man he supposed must be the Department of Justice operative Mr. Nelson had referred to. "There may be shooting here."

But, if O'Connor hesitated, the boy did not. He felt he had faced worse than a gun half a block away. "He won't shoot," he said, as he followed up the steps; "he's all yellow."

"Then streak round the house and watch the back. Yell, if he tries to break cover there." The





“ IN THE HAND OF EACH WAS SOMETHING BLUE AND COLD ”







man hurriedly wrenched the front door open.  
“Hustle!”

Even as he sped around the corner, the boy saw the two officers leap into the house and in the hand of each was something blue and cold. Yet, hardly had he reached a spot from which he could watch the back door and windows, before remembrance turned him suddenly sick.

Mr. Mayhew had told him to have O'Connor head off Mrs. Stone. He had failed in what he believed to be the crucial part of his trust. Even as the officers searched for Stone, his wife might be making good her escape with what she had secured at the bank. And this, the boy was sure, was what Mr. Mayhew wished to have captured above all else. There was but one way to make good his failure. Without considering the risk, he darted for the back door.

It, too, was unlocked, but he did not give this a thought as he plunged into the dark kitchen. All he could think of was the need of finding one of the two officers and all he could be thankful for was



that first visit to the house which had made him familiar with its plan.

From the kitchen, he turned toward the dining-room by way of the pantry. It, too, was dark. Speed was all he considered. He fumbled for the door knob, found it, sprang into the room.

“Hands up!”

The grim, businesslike sharpness of the order sent his heart into his throat. “It’s — it’s —”

“Halt!”

“It’s — it’s only me.”

“Stand still or I’ll shoot!”

This time the boy stopped. At last he realized his position, and just how fortunate he was not to have run into the excitable O’Connor in the dark. If ever a boy had taken a long chance, it was this one. “It’s Lowell,” he whispered, his voice rasping on his dry tongue. “Mr. Mayhew says to head off Mrs. Stone. She’s on the six-thirty train.”

A flash light broke the gloom, but Joe could only see the white bull’s-eye. A grim laugh came from behind it. “Lord only knows why I didn’t pot



you!" exclaimed the man. "Next time you're told to stick up your hands and stop, do it pronto. O'Connor's upstairs."

"I'll find him." Joe started for the door.

The man grabbed him by the collar. "If you want to commit suicide, here's my gun. Mix a little sense with some of your grit."

"But Mr. Mayhew —"

"Five minutes won't matter, youngster; we'll finish this job first."

"But the old boss —"

"You've delivered his message; I'll be responsible. Get back in the yard. I'm going down cellar."

Joe did as he was told but, once more in the safety of the night, he began to appreciate just how close a call he had had. Cold chills began to run up his back and his knees trembled. Then came the thought of the two men searching through the dark house. He knew what the man in the cellar was hoping to meet at any instant, he realized what O'Connor hoped to face alone on the second floor.



Each second he expected to hear the shots; each second that passed in silence meant so much less risk of life. Yet these two men not only took it all as part of the day's work, but called it courage when he went in.

Two minutes more and the cellar hatch went up. The secret service man came into the yard. "Bird's flown," he said with a carelessness which made Joe start. "Hi, Chief!"

O'Connor's head appeared at an attic window. "Not here. Find anything?"

"No. Light up, as you come down. I'll go back through this way."

"Where do I go?" asked Joe.

The operative looked him over. He liked this lad who wasn't afraid and he caught the little note of excited longing in his voice. "Come with me, if you want," he said; "guess it's safe."

It was. The house was deserted. But it had been deserted in a hurry. Rummaged drawers and burned papers in fireplaces told their story under the blaze of lights. Henry Stone had gone, and



gone in a hurry. But before he had gone, he had evidently burned what he considered some important bridges behind him. "We'll go over this stuff later," stated the man. "What we want to do now is head off the madam. Call O'Connor. I'll start the car. We need a telephone."

"There's one in the next room," Joe ventured to suggest.

"Good for you! Never thought of that. Putting it all over me, youngster."

It was all so good-natured that Joe could not but think of how differently O'Connor would have taken the calling of his attention to an oversight. This man was big in his way; there was no doubt about that.

For the next ten minutes Joe had a very good exhibition of how far reaching certain nets used to be. Telephone calls were put through with a speed which startled him, and orders were given with a crispness which made him wonder. Almost before he knew it, little waves had been started which would spread half way across the country within the hour.



A warning to one man meant a warning to ten more. It was as if he saw the action at the palm of a hand. The orders ran out to the fingers and, at each fingertip, was a new hand with more fingertips and more hands beyond.

"We'll have Frau Stone within the hour," promised the man. "Friend husband's going to give us a better run for our money. Now let's see Mr. Mayhew, Chief, and check up."

"All right," agreed O'Connor, starting for the car. "Leave the kid here, Sloan; we don't need him any more."

The operative saw Joe's jaw drop and winked at him. "Reckon we'd better keep him with us," he said. "He's a dangerous character."

"How's that?"

"Knows too much. Also I've grown to like sand since I've been in this game. You stick close to me, young man," he advised, his eyes twinkling as if he was not doing anything more important than taking a pleasant vacation in Gillfield. "I'm always needing help. Hop into the tonneau."



Joe needed no second invitation. This man was almost as likable as Mr. Jackson. As they rushed up the hill to the Mayhew house, he wondered if the two were friends, if it could be possible that Mr. Jackson could also be connected with the secret service. But speculation was cut decidedly short as the machine stopped before the broad steps. Mr. Nelson had come out at the first sounds of the approaching car. "Did you catch him?" he asked anxiously.

"No, sir." It was Chief O'Connor who answered. "He evidently left town in a hurry. The house —"

"Come in. Mr. Mayhew'll want to hear it all."

This time the little party went past the reception-room, on down the long hall and into the old boss's particular lair. A very much excited, and decidedly mystified, boy sat on the extreme edge of a great chair by the center table, while Mr. Mayhew himself walked back and forth, his hands clasped behind his back, his head shaking as he thought in silence.

As Mr. Nelson stood aside to permit the new-



comers to enter, Mr. Mayhew half turned and, seeing Sloan, nodded. "Too late?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"'Fraid you would be. How about her?"

"Ought to have her within an hour. They'll telephone me here. It was a fortunate thing you found out about her going so soon."

"These boys did it." It was not a compliment, merely an acknowledgment of good work done and made by one man to another, and the boys thrilled as they caught its full meaning.

"Fine! Fine!" agreed Sloan heartily. "Any idea of where your man Stone is apt to head for?"

"No."

"Imagine he'll meet his wife as soon as possible," suggested Mr. Nelson.

"He certainly will," agreed O'Connor.

Sloan shook his head. "Pardon me for saying it, gentlemen," he said, "but you've underestimated him too long already. It's the one thing he won't do."

"Why?"



“Because they’re too wise. They’ll communicate — if we don’t land one of them, but they won’t communicate direct, I’ll stake my reputation on that.”

“But can you get them?”

“We people don’t stop until we do, Mr. Mayhew.”

There was no boasting in the answer, only the simple statement of a custom. The secret service is patient but it never, never gives up.

“Pity you didn’t act this morning,” growled the old boss. “Stone wasn’t even suspicious when you were talking with him in the office.”

Sloan bit his lip. “I really can’t agree with you, even now, sir,” he stated. “While I then had strong suspicions concerning his wife, they were only suspicions. Now they’re rather well established by her headlong get-away. If we’d have sprung then, we’ve have caught one man and mighty little evidence to hold him with. While we might have been able to make him disappear, there would have been a hue and cry. Now, when we get him, we’ll get enough with him to make a good bag. This thing has other strings than the Mayhew plant.”



"What's your theory?" asked Mr. Nelson, eagerly.

Sloan thought a moment, then raised his eyes to Mr. Mayhew's. "I take it you vouch for every one here, sir?" he asked.

"These boys work for me, have been on the case longer than you." There was a queer little suggestion of a smile in the old blue eyes. "Imagine they've a vital interest in it."

"They the ones who were in the Connelly end?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Sure, they're all right! But this is almighty tight under your hats, boys."

"We can keep a secret," stated Joe.

"And our mouths shut," promised the long-suffering Harvey. "I've learned to do that."

"All right. Then I'll theorize for you, Mr. Nelson, but, mind you, it's only theory. If it works out, then I'll call myself a shrewd guesser and that's all."

"What you going to do, sit here and talk?" growled O'Connor.



"Might as well do that as pace the floor, Chief," was the laughing reply. "The telephone's started all the wheels going. All we have to do is wait for them to grind. And there's where you'll hear the grinding from," he added with a wave of his hand toward the instrument on the table. "I'm an even smaller cog in a bigger machine than are your friends, the Steins."

The chief was becoming less and less pleased with his part in the play. These newer methods were not at all to his liking. A good chief of police lives on publicity and much noticeable activity. This man evidently believed in neither. With a grunt, O'Connor sat down in a corner. Sloan leaned on the edge of the table, talking directly to Mr. Mayhew.

"A few of you manufacturers did what we call 'falling' for the 'German expert' stuff," he began. "You took bright young Huns into your offices, because you believed them better educated than our American boys. You let them into your confidence and your business secrets and they wrote long re-



ports back to a certain office in Berlin. And those reports were not all about business, either. The German Intelligence knows America from A to Z. The only thing it hasn't got, is a true knowledge of American psychology. The only reason it hasn't that is because the Hun is too stupid to believe that any one else on earth has brains.

"Now, I may be wrong," he went on, "but I'll bet a new hat against a hole in a doughnut that your man Stein, or Stone, or whatever his real name is, is just an employee of the German Intelligence office. He was sent to this country, he was sent to Gillfield, he was told to stay here, to become an American citizen, to do everything to make you good people believe he was all United States. And, while he was doing these things, he was strongly reminded not to forget rather definite orders about monthly reports and he was given the address of some innocent appearing little delicatessen dealer through whom to forward them and from whom to take orders blindly.

"Also,"—and he smiled when he said it—



“he was given a certain sealed envelope and told to put it in some very safe place and not to open it until he received a telegram which had some prearranged key word in it. All this went on for years. Stein went back to Germany a few years ago, but his orders were so complete, so minute, that no changes were necessary. He brought a wife back with him. The great general staff was never too busy to neglect the brides of even its humblest agents. Frau Stone was probably neatly netted, bound and forced into the great game of ‘helping the Fatherland,’ even if she wasn’t at it before.

“Then war came. Stone got his telegram with its key word. He opened his sealed envelope and there was a whole new set of instructions. Mind you, this is only guess work so far,” he said, “But you asked my theory and I’m building it from what I’ve learned here and from past experiences in other places. He’d a new code on hand now — probably two of them. And he was given more addresses of unknown people from whom he was to take orders and whom he must absolutely obey.”



“ But he’s an American,” protested Mr. Nelson; “ he wouldn’t do it.”

“ A Hun’s ’most always a Hun, sir; specially the younger generation of ’em. They’re brought up to obey, trained like dogs to take orders. Besides, I’m talking of their spies. So, when America entered the war, Stone was told what he had been planted in Gillfield for. The Mayhew plant would go over to government work; any fool could see that. For ten years, Heinrich Stein had been paid to live in Gillfield to make the Mayhew plant fail when the Hun needed it to fail. Until they were ready to strike us from the sea, they were going to stab us through our industries.”

He took a long breath and turned squarely to Mr. Mayhew. “ You wouldn’t believe the first warning you received from Jackson, sir,” he reminded him; “ you said you’d trust Stone implicitly. He repaid that trust, unless I very much miss my guess, by first passing faulty steel through your testing room, then by falsifying certain gauges. When Connelly was intrusted with the master set, he saw his great



chance. If he could steal them, he would close the plant. It was safe, sure, certain. He took the chance. These youngsters blocked it by happening along just too soon."

"But it was Stone who returned the gauges to Mr. Mayhew," grunted the chief. "I saw him. He had them. He wouldn't have given them up, after risking murder to get them — not if he'd wanted them that bad."

"Don't know the whys and wherefores of that part. All I've seen is some one else's report. I do know that Stone was almighty clever in pulling the wool over every one's eyes but those of one man. He didn't fool him for one second, not with all his play acting and his offers of assistance. But he was after bigger game than Stone. He had him marked down, knew where he could find him, when he wanted him, and was willing to let events take their own course, for reasons of his own. And no harm's come of it, either," he added forcefully.

"Stone's gotten away, so's his wife," suggested



Mr. Mayhew, to whom this was now an old story and, therefore, slightly less bitter.

Sloan laughed. "They have — temporarily," he agreed. "But don't overlook the fact that they've done this get-away with all the evidence we're after concealed on their persons. Some one got wise, probably Stone himself. He's been suspicious for a couple of weeks. We've known that. When he saw me, he probably decided it was time to move elsewhere. He suspected a trap. His wife, being a dutiful Hun, and having established a fine name for quietness and helpfulness among her neighbors, was ordered to get the secret orders and take 'em away from here. Maybe they divided 'em. If they were clever enough for that, it will mean a good deal more work. The Stones will interest us personally, but not nearly so much as what one, or both of them, has."

"Gee!" gulped Fat, his eyes bulging out of his round head. "Gee! I was right all the time!"

"You were," agreed Mr. Mayhew. "You boys have certainly been wide awake. But, once or



twice," he added with a queer smile, "you've been perilously near upsetting the plans of some very powerful agencies which are not of Hun origin."

"Where, sir?"

"I'll tell you when the Stones are safely arrested."

"And you think they'll catch them?"

"I do. I —"

He stopped, for just then a sharp ring made Sloan leap for the telephone.



## CHAPTER X

### THE NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK

THAT night two boys left the Mayhew home in as agitated a state of mind as it was possible for two boys to be. From Sloan's brief conversation over the telephone, they had gathered that something had gone wrong somewhere, somehow. But that was all. Sloan had hung up the receiver with no show of impatience, no sign of disappointment, and had turned to O'Connor. "Guess you're elected for a night motor trip, Chief," he had said. "How soon can we start?"

"What is it?" Mr. Mayhew had demanded.

Sloan had looked at him, the corners of his mouth still drawn down into that near-smile. "I could theorize about it, sir," had been the retort; "but, just at present, I'm not so keen about airing my thoughts as I was. I've only one thing to say, and



that's to ask you not to worry." Nor could even the insistence of the impatient old boss get more from him. With O'Connor, he had disappeared into the night, leaving the boys to wander homeward with a feeling that a heavy, black curtain had been dropped suddenly before their eyes.

Joe was keenly disappointed. He had thought that the triumphant end was close at hand; he had gone to bed with an impending sense of some evil event hanging low over his head. He woke in the morning to find his mother standing by his bed, a telegram in her hand, her lips twitching. "I've some bad news for you, Joe," she said.

"What — what is it?" He was up in a flash. "Has anything happened to father?"

"No, it's not quite so bad as that. Only we're not going to Washington — not yet, at any rate."

"Oh!" The relief was so great because nothing had happened to the major, that the crashing of his own dreams did not come to his mind. Then he remembered. "Why can't we go?" he asked.

"Father can't find a place for us to live. He



wires it's very crowded there. But I know he'll keep on trying."

Joe, too, knew. He knew other things as well. It was all his mother could do to keep back the tears of disappointment. "Never mind," he comforted, "he'll find a place for us soon. He's not the sort who fails."

"I know he's not, son."

"And we'll be with him before you know it," he added. "It's all right, and I know we're not half so disappointed as he is."

She saw how brave he was trying to be over his own broken plans and tried to say something, but suddenly turned and ran from the room. For a moment he stood looking at the door. "Now see here," he stated to himself, "this sort of thing won't do at all. I've got to forget I ever wanted to go to Washington. I've got to help mother. Guess I've my part right here at home."

As he hurried into his clothes, he became thoroughly convinced that he was right. In his own joy, he had not grasped how longingly Mrs. Lowell had



been counting the days before they could join the major. He went down the stairs whistling although there was a lump in his throat and he felt more like attempting a funeral, than a Sousa, march. Although he saw that his mother's eyes were red, he started glibly on a gay story of Tug and Hec and, before they had finished the oatmeal, she was smiling again. But it was because she recognized the brave effort her boy was making to keep her cheerful, and not because her own heart was any the less sore.

He tried to map out his future course of activity even as he talked. He did not quite like the idea of going to work now. He felt he should be at home as much as possible for the next week or so at least. But his half-formed plans were again wrecked on the instant this time, not by a telegram, but by a telephone.

It was Mrs. Lowell who ran to answer the call and he knew that she had hoped that it might prove a contradictory message from his father. But in a minute she was back. "Mr. Nelson wants you to



report to him at the bank at once," she said. "He told me it was very important and not to worry until I saw you again. But what is it, Joe? Do you know?"

He shook his head. The memory of last night came back. "I don't know," he said; "something happened last night. Maybe it's to do with that."

"What happened?"

"I can't tell you," he said slowly. "Mr. Mayhew made me promise not to tell any one. It's all right," he added quickly, as he saw her expression change. "Nothing's wrong with any of us boys."

"Is it — is it anything to do with Jim Connelly? Oh, Joe, I can't let you run any more such risks! You're too young and you're all I have left."

He was on his feet, the last of his breakfast in his hand. "Don't you worry about me for a minute," he urged. "Nothing can happen to me. You trust Mr. Mayhew and Mr. Nelson, don't you?"

"Yes."

"They won't ask me to do anything I shouldn't do. Whatever it is, it must be important, or Mr.



Nelson wouldn't have telephoned. He's Scout Commissioner, you know, and he expects us Scouts to obey orders quickly."

"And you think it's only Scout business, Joe?"

"I'm sure it's that," he said; "I'll telephone you, if it isn't. But I'm sure it's just some Scout hike, or something. Maybe some kid's been lost and they want us to hunt it," he added, as he grabbed for his cap. "That's happened other places. The Kendallville patrols were called out for that last year. I'll telephone you anyway. Good-by." He kissed her twice and started for the door. "Bet dad finds a home for us within a month," he called back cheerily. "It will be better in Washington in the fall, anyway."

Once out of the yard, Joe began to run. He knew it was too early for the bank to be open, knew that Mr. Nelson must have something very important to say to have sent for him so peremptorily. He was certain that it must have to do with what had happened the previous night and it added to his speed. Yet, when he saw Stan Wood and Alex Cot-



ton hurrying ahead of him, apparently answering calls such as his, he began to have his doubts about it.

When he overtook the two, he found them as greatly mystified as he was himself. All they knew was that the Scout Commissioner had ordered them to report to him at once. Alex gave the added information that Mr. Mayhew's orders were behind Mr. Nelson's. He "supposed Harve Foster would show up at the bank sooner or later," and, knowing Fat, was rather certain it would be later.

The sight of Hec, sitting expectantly on the steps in front of the bank, told Joe that a call had been sent out at least for the Wolf Patrol and he knew he would find Tug inside. As they came to the door, it opened before they could touch the knob and Mr. Nelson waved them on toward the directors' room. "Tug and Nelse are already here," he said. "Three more are yet to come. I believe the Wolves will be enough. If not, I shall have to call out the other patrols this afternoon."

"Don't bother with them," laughed Nelse. "We



can do it, only do tell us what it is. I'm busting with curiosity. So's Tuggie."

"So'm I," echoed Ned.

Mr. Nelson nodded gravely. "I can believe it," he agreed. "Joe, I want to talk with you alone for a moment. You're patrol leader?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Nelson led the way back to his own desk and, sitting down, motioned to Joe to pull a chair close to his. "You and Harvey know a great deal about the Stone case which we do not think it necessary others should know as yet," he began. "You two, and you, in particular, Joe, have been of great assistance and we are going to ask more of you. It is Mr. Mayhew's suggestion, and I am particularly glad that he thought of calling on the Scouts — and I don't think you know this, nor do I think he'd object to my telling you now — he hasn't always been enthusiastic about our organization."

"He rather hinted at that once," said the boy, with a reminiscent smile, "but I know he's changed a whole lot since."



"I'm sure of it. I imagine you're responsible for it, too. But that's aside from the matter at hand. The secret service people captured Mrs. Stone last night at the Junction."

"Fine! Did they find the papers?"

"No."

"Then Sloan's theory was wrong?"

"No. What's more, I imagine he was giving us far more fact than surmise. She had the papers when she left Gillfield. Sloan telephoned me an hour ago that they'd been able to make her say enough to convince them of that. Between ourselves, I guess Mrs. Stone knows a good deal about an American third degree by this time. But now Sloan admits that he's working solely on theory. If she had the papers when she left Gillfield, and didn't have them when she reached the Junction, she either gave them to some one on the train, or threw them off."

"Couldn't she have mailed 'em?" suggested Joe.  
"They've those letter boxes at 'most every little station."



"You may take it for granted that they're not in the mail," stated Mr. Nelson, with a wise smile. "Sloan is quite positive that there was no confederate on the train. She did not have time to send for help. But something must have happened to make her suspicious. Sloan's convinced that she became frightened and threw the papers off the train, either intending to lose them permanently, or else to come back later and recover them. It's for that I've called out the Wolves. We want you to find that package."

"Of course we'll try, sir, but it will be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. It's thirty-five miles to the Junction and it would take us weeks to do a thorough job."

"I know that. But I'm not asking the impossible. Neither's Sloan. He's a pretty thorough sort of chap — Sloan. Imagine that whole train crew think so. He knows that Mrs. Stone opened the window she sat by just before the train reached the river bridge beyond Blodgett's Crossing. He says she wouldn't throw anything out immediately.



A woman hesitates where a man wouldn't. He believes she tried to throw the package into the river, or into the thick underbrush — if she wanted to recover it. And he believes she does. She was on the south side of the car. He is sure you can find what he wants on one side of the bridge or the other. He thinks this side. Will you boys hunt for it?"

"We'll try."

"I took that for granted. But, Joe," he went on earnestly, "neither Sloan, nor any of us here, want it known what you're after. Would it be possible to fix it up with the Wolves so that they'll believe they're hunting for something the bank has lost?"

"They won't care what they're hunting. The Wolves do as they're ordered and ask no questions. Can you tell me what the package, or papers, or whatever it is, looks like?"

"No," he admitted, "I can't. That's the hard part of it."

"Whew!" The exclamation was barely audible and, for a moment, the boy sat with his face between his hands, elbows on knees and eyes fixed on



the floor. He weighed the chances for success and the balance of the scales were all against him. The Wolves were game, they would try anything. But now they were faced with the impossible. He knew it was not only the Scout Commissioner who was asking this of them, not only Mr. Mayhew, on whom so much future joy depended, but their country. This request was from the secret service. He would do better than his best, but he wanted a fighting chance.

Slowly he raised his eyes to find those of Mr. Nelson watching him anxiously. "You're asking me to tell them to find something," he said slowly, "and you won't let me tell them what it is."

"Papers."

"I know," he went on. "I'm just sorter thinking out loud, I reckon. If the bank lost it, it must be in a bank envelope, or wrapper. Wouldn't it be?" he demanded, in an entirely different voice.

"I don't know, Joe."

"The Stones are too clever to keep anything in a German package," stated the boy. "You think the



stuff's been kept here. Couldn't they have gotten big envelopes from the bank?"

"Certainly. There are always some on the desks outside the vault."

"May I have one of each. I'll bet she used one of 'em."

"What makes you think so?"

"Don't know, just do. I'm sure of it."

"Aren't you theorizing just a little?" Mr. Nelson suggested warningly.

"Maybe," he admitted. "But, somehow or other, both Stones have done just what we've expected them to do everytime they've done anything. Maybe that's just the Hun way of always doing things."

"You're right," declared Mr. Nelson emphatically. "The Hun has done the obvious thing from the very beginning. Anyway," he finished more cautiously, "it's a working start. Here comes Harvey and the other two. I'll let them in; you get your envelopes to show them; I'll meet you all in the directors' room. But you're to talk; you command



the Patrol. We're going down to Blodgett's by motor. I'm going with you."

"Very good, sir." Joe, too, rose and hurried toward the writing table at the side of the closed vault. Ten minutes more and he had explained what he wished to the Patrol. They were to find an envelope like one of the half dozen he had shown them, they were to pick up any pieces of paper with writing on them, they were to take anything of the sort they discovered to Mr. Nelson at once and they were to ask no question, because that was his command.

"Fine and dandy!" snorted Fat. "Invitation to play hunt-the-thimble in the wilderness. I'm game, all right, all right; so's the rest of the bunch. We'll play puss-in-the-corner or ring-around-the-rosy till the cows come home, but this business of not knowing the reason for the party is putting us to some little test, believe you me! Some little test!"

"You can meet it, can't you, Harve?" Joe's eyes twinkled.

"Can, if I don't bust with curiosity," came the



instantaneous answer, as Mr. Foster started for the door and two of the waiting Mayhew motors. "Hi, Tug! Are you aiming to take Hec, the Bloodhound, along?"

"I'd like to," the little fellow answered, stooping to scratch his pet's yellow ear.

"Better," chuckled Fat. "Maybe it was Little Eva or Uncle Tom who lost them poipers. I feel like the hero in the fourth reel already. If that's lunch you've got in that box, Mr. Nelson, don't put it in the car with me. Where's Joe?"

"Saw him at the telephone as we came out," volunteered Nelse. "Oh, here he comes. Get a move, you old land crab, and quit trying to look wise! Don't pretend that you know what's up any more than we do."

Joe waved a hand as he climbed into the other car and took his seat at Mr. Nelson's side. "Just wanted to tell mother I wouldn't be home for lunch," he explained. "Sorry, if I've kept you waiting. Hi, Tug, put some goggles on Hec! We're going to make time."



"What Hec needs is a muzzle," called Harvey. "He's after the lunch already."

"Fat's jealous," announced Stan. "Here we go! This is the real way to make a hike. Three cheers for Mr. Nelson!"

The banker smiled his encouragement. It was well to have them in such spirits. He felt they would need all the cheerfulness they could muster before the day was over. In fact, when Sloan's telephone message had routed him out of bed that morning, he had been able to see small chance for results in the operative's request. But it had not taken long to convince him that any chance was worth taking and taking at once.

The ride through the pleasant country-side proved Joe had been right when he promised that the Patrol would not ask questions. They had not time to do anything but thoroughly enjoy themselves. As Ned said, it started out like a real party and, so far as he was concerned, he didn't care what they asked him to do so long as Mr. Nelson continued to provide such fun. And Mr. Nelson, entering into their



spirit, insisted in stopping at Blodgett's one store and buying a case of soda, as an added part of the treat.

A mile further, and they turned off the main road and wound down through the woods toward the single railroad track. "Some one's ahead of us," called Nelse, from the front seat of the leading car. "I can see tracks of wheels. It's a carriage."

"He's trying to show off his woodcraft," chuckled Alex. "He'll be wig-wagging next."

"Not Nelse," retorted Joe, with a laugh. "He never could remember the code. But he's right, for once; some one else has been here."

"Turn the bloodhound loose on his trail," suggested Fat. "Knew we'd brought that pup for some reason."

Mr. Nelson alone appeared to take Nelse's discovery seriously. Joe saw the frown on his face. "Think some one's beaten us to it?" he asked.

"Don't know. It may be Sloan sent some one up from the Junction. We'll learn in a minute. If Nelse can read wig-wagging," he said suddenly,



“send him a message to slow down. We’ll get out here quietly.”

Joe’s whistle was out of his pocket in a flash and one low call made the boys in the other car look back. Even before he could stand up, Nelse had told the chauffeur to stop, that something was wanted of them. The next instant he came racing back.

“What’s up?” he demanded as he reached the side of their car.

“We get out here,” stated Mr. Nelson. “Joe was going to wigwag it to you.”

“Knew I’d save time by coming back,” observed the boy. “It would take him all day to get a message out of his system.”

“It would — if I had to make you understand it,” agreed Joe, good-naturedly. “Everybody out! Hurry up! Mr. Nelson, we’re ready to follow you.”

“All but Hec,” said Stan. “He’s got the idea there’s a rabbit loose here or hereabouts. Look at him!”



"Come here, Hec!" Tug commanded. "You stay with me."

"Better let him stay with Fat," offered Alex; "then he won't get all tired out."

"You quit trying to pick on me and begin to 'button-button-who's-got-the-button?'" suggested Harvey. "Shall I take the soda along, sir?"

"You're going to take about half of it, whatever he answers," retorted the unsympathetic Alex. "Who's going to walk with me?"

"You're all going to wait a minute," retorted Mr. Nelson. "I want to talk with Joe." He led him off to one side and the boys saw their leader nod his comprehension as the Scout Commissioner spoke earnestly. After a minute, the boy returned.

"These wheel tracks," he began, "may not be such a joke as we thought they were. Mr. Nelson wants us to advance quietly. Nelse and I will go ahead and see if we can find where they lead to. Give us five minutes. If I don't whistle for you before then, head down for the next turn of the road and then strike through the woods for the rail-



road and wait there till I come. All ready, Nelse?"

"Sure!"

"Keep Hec quiet, Tug. Come ahead."

The two started down the road at a fast walk. The wagon tracks were plain and certainly only a few hours old, so it was not difficult to follow them. But within a second hundred yards, the sand gave way to grass and the trail became difficult to find. They checked their pace to a slow walk. At a fork of a wood road, the trail vanished completely. It was utterly impossible to tell which way the team had gone.

"We'd better split," suggested Nelse. "I'll take this road, you follow that. If either of us strike any sign, he'll give the patrol call for the other."

Joe thought for a moment. "Don't believe it's worth it," he said. "We came out for something else. We'll report to Mr. Nelson first, then, if he wants us to follow your scheme, we can come back."

"All right," agreed the other. "Guess that's the best thing. Probably only some farmer driving down to a swamp meadow somewhere ahead, any-



way. These woods are full of little meadows. How do we hit the track from here?"

Joe nodded toward the right-hand road. "This ought to take us somewhere near it," he said. "Anyway, it's easier to follow it for a way than to hit through the woods."

"You're boss. Let's go!"

"All right, come along."

It was a longer walk than they had expected and, though the road finally crossed the tracks, it was at some distance from the bridge. They hurried down the ties, knowing that the others would be impatient at the wait. Yet, when they reached the bridge, Mr. Nelson was sitting on the bank alone. "Didn't think you'd object to my starting them before you arrived," he said. "We may need all our time. Find anything?"

"Forked road and no trail," Joe replied tersely. "Glad you put the rest to work, sir. Did you save a place for us?"

"I surely did. Down here in the undergrowth by the edge of the river. It's the worst of the lot,



and you'll have to work it thoroughly and very carefully."

"For what?" Nelse could control his curiosity no longer. It seemed high time that a few things be explained.

In a few words Mr. Nelson told him enough to promise a busy morning ahead for him. He also showed him a set of envelopes, such as Joe had in his pocket. "If you can find one like any of these," he finished, "every one will be more than satisfied. But, if you discover any torn bits of paper with writing on them, bring them to me."

"Where are the others?" Joe asked, as he was about to plunge down the bank and into the tangle of alders by the river.

"Harve and Alex are searching up the track. You must have passed near them as you came down. Ned and Stan are just across the bridge. Tug and Nick are down the track. That makes four on each side of the river. I think I'll look along both downstream banks myself. It may have fallen in the water and floated down."



"Small chance," confessed the boy. "It would sink, if there were many papers in it."

"Know that. But I'd throw for the water, if I'd been trying to destroy anything."

"You would," grinned Joe, "but you didn't do this. I'll fish it out of this tangle in ten minutes." He waved a hand and slid down the bank to the edge of the stream. "You work back till you bump into Harve or Alex, Nelse," he ordered; "I'll take care of this place."

"Get you!" agreed Nelse, and began to weave back and forth, his eyes on the ground, the stiff branches snapping and slapping into his set face.

Yet, if any of the boys found excitement in the beginning of the search, it wore off by the end of the first unsuccessful hour, becoming a hard, hot grind and the only thing which kept them at it was the united resolve that the Wolves must not fail. From time to time, one or two returned to Mr. Nelson at the bridge in hope of new instructions, only to find him growing more and more sober of face and quieter in manner.



Joe was convinced that nothing could have fallen in his assigned territory which could have been overlooked in the minuteness of his hunt. Nelse was equally sure; so were Ned and Stan, who had the corresponding territory across the river. At last Mr. Nelson was forced to admit they must be right and to agree to Joe's suggestion that they move further down the track. The man was sure that there was little use in extending the hunt further to the east.

Of them all, little Tug was more nearly enjoying the hunt. Not having the remotest idea what he was after, except that it was probably a brown envelope which contained something which was none of his business and, therefore, of no interest to him, he was keeping busy by allowing his always vivid imagination free rein. It was the key to a hidden treasure that was lost, he told himself, and, if he could only find it, his share in the division probably would not only give him enough to buy Hec a new collar, but might even make possible the long-dreamed-of bicycle. Any lad with such dreams



could find no cause for complaint because he was very hot, or because the flies and mosquitoes were making him the actual field for a Roman holiday in insectdom.

It was swampy, too, where he was searching. Thick clumps of brush grew close to the tracks, making little islands in a muddy, sedgy sea. The place was not at all to Nick's liking and he was only too glad to move on down the track and take up new ground. But Tug was not yet satisfied that all the ground-and-water had been covered systematically. Also Hec, having captured two frogs, one small snake and discovered a mud turtle, was finding the place decidedly agreeable and was, apparently, in no hurry to seek new field of endeavor.

The rest of the boys treated Tug's desire to remain behind merely as another illustration of the little fellow's putterings, and any one of them would have gone a long way rather than hurt his feelings by telling him they were sure he was only wasting time. And, besides, Joe was not the only one who knew that Nick might have been a trifle superficial



in his part of the search. For, if Tug was thorough in all he did, Nick was equally prone to stroll the easiest way.

"When you find anything, trot down the track with it until you find us," Joe called, as he went past.

"I'll be there with something worth while before you know it," promised the little fellow, straightening up and mopping his red face. "This swamp grass is awful'y thick, Joey."

"Sure is!" Joe waved a friendly hand. "Don't stay till you get lonesome," he advised.

But, with Hec for company and a treasure hunt in hand, there was no danger of such a thing happening to Tug. Joyously he splashed his way back and forth, and Hec, the faithful, whoofed and splashed all round him.

Half an hour more, and he had convinced himself that the missing envelope was not in the territory which had been assigned him. In his methodical way, he had covered every inch of the ground and investigated every pool. It was growing hotter, too, and the black flies were biting him viciously.



For a moment, he looked longingly at the shady bank below the track. He was almost sure neither Joe nor Mr. Nelson would mind if he stopped a few minutes and sat there to rest before going on to join the others.

The fact that he had been unsuccessful, hurt. From his first splash into the swamp, he had promised himself he would be the one to bring much honor to the Wolves. Here, at last, he was on an equal footing with the larger boys, for it was all a question of eyesight. That persistence might also enter into the reckoning, did not occur to him.

But, as he started for the embankment, a new and driving thought came to him. Unless this envelope thing were very important, Mr. Nelson would never have left the bank for a whole day. If a man was eager to devote his time to the search, a boy, and especially a Boy Scout, had no right to loaf. He turned southward to join the Patrol and be assigned to a new field, but, in spite of the fact that his feet dragged and his head and back ached, he stuck to the swamp. Certainly it would not be disloyal to



Nick if he walked over the places where he had said there was nothing.

Yet, before he had gone twenty yards, his little mind began to be very troubled. Loyalty to Nick was now uppermost in his thoughts and an anxious, worried frown puckered his usually smooth forehead. He had discovered two thick clumps of swamp grass about which there were no signs of foot prints, no traces of Nick's investigations. His friend had evidently been content to make only a very careless search. Tug drew a long, slow breath, and, once more, began to weave back and forth. If one boy had failed, the honor of the Wolves was in his, Tug's, keeping and he must protect it in spite of the lure of that shady bank.

Another twenty yards and he began to have real sympathy for Nick. The swamp edged closer to the bank and it was thick and sticky. Ahead, he saw a small clump of low trees, a swamp maple rising above them like a sentinel. He knew enough about woodcraft to know it meant firmer ground there, so headed for it.



A little further, and he sank to his knees in black, greasy ooze. The insects were in swarms now. The sun beat hot upon him. Nick had apparently fought through, for Tug saw grass bent down into the water and footmarks on the occasional hummocks. Then came a small and beaten circle. It told its own story. Nick, the careless and comfort-loving, had come so far but no further. The trail was plain along which the slacker had plunged for the railroad track and good walking.

But, of all places which invited search, that which lay ahead promised best. Tug did not know how deep the muck was, but he knew he must go through. He was a Wolf. The honor of another Wolf lay in his hands. Staggering, sinking, slipping, floundering, the little chap fought gamely toward that maple, but never once did he take his eyes from the ground around him.

Then, of a sudden, he saw something which made him cry aloud. To his left, and not ten feet from the edge of the railroad bank, lay a wet, brown object. He made a lunge for it, slipped, fell with a



splash, but wiggled on till his hand clutched it. It was an envelope like one of those which Mr. Nelson had told him to find. He had succeeded when the rest had failed — he, Tug, the youngest of all the Wolves.

It never occurred to him to open the dripping, soggy thing as he plowed toward dry ground. He had been ordered to find the envelope and then to take it to Mr. Nelson. The thing to do now was to find Mr. Nelson. Tired as he was, he knew he would run down the track as he had never run before.

As he reached the bank, he tried to whistle for the distant Hec. His lips were too dry. He called huskily. Then, as if it were an echo, came a voice, low, stern and gruff, from out of the heart of the thicket before the lone maple. "Shut up!" it commanded hoarsely. "Stand still! I want that thing."

Like a flash, memory of those wagon tracks Joe had followed came to him. The some one who wanted the envelope was a real some one and that



some one was plunging through the swamp toward him.

For a second, he stood motionless. Through the swamp, a man came leaping toward him, a man who, to the little chap, looked as big as a giant and as ugly as a thunderstorm. There was no mistaking the expression on the square face, no doubt as to the intent which gleamed in the black, close-set eyes. He meant to have that envelope at any price. And the price looked very small.

He came on. There seemed to be less need for haste now. Tug stood like a bird fascinated by a snake. The man saw that he was too frightened to stir. A wicked, triumphant grin spread over his face. "Saved me hunting, didn't you? Good boy! Hold it! I'll take it in a second."

"No you won't!" It was almost a scream, but Tug had been brought back to life. His feet were like lead, and his knees like jelly, but he made a break down the track. "Hec!" he called. "Hec!"

He heard a final splash, heard stones slip and





“ HE MADE A BREAK DOWN THE TRACK ”







clatter as the man won the track, then the pound of big feet as they took up the pursuit. If he only knew how far ahead Mr. Nelson and the rest were! If he could only reach them in time to give the tight-clutched envelope into safe hands!

The man was gaining rapidly. Tug's short legs tried to lengthen their stride, but the fight against the swamp had made him very tired. He could see no help ahead. The track ran straight for at least two hundred yards. He knew he had no chance. Every second he expected a heavy hand to fall on his shoulder, or a heavy fist to send him spinning down into the swamp. He wanted Joe Lowell, he wanted Nelse, he wanted Harve, but, most of all, he wanted faithful, flea-bitten, yellow, old Hec. Although he had about as little breath as he had hope, he called the dog again and again, his voice ringing with terror.

And, from up that track, was coming forty pounds of real friendship. Neck thrust out, scarred ears close to the narrow head, feet seeming barely to touch rough gravel and ties, white teeth bared, rushed



Hec, every drop of his Irish blood driving him on. He came like a yellow streak of sunlight and, as he came, his stride lengthened, then shortened suddenly, as the soft pads found their take-off. The lean jaws opened, the wiry body lunged. There was a yell, a crash and Hec tore free from that wildly waving leg on which he had swung all his weight to make that tripping, whirlwind fall.

From the yell of rage and pain, Tug knew something had happened behind him, but, now that the beat of the pursuing feet had stopped, he dared not waste time to look around. He heard a new sound, a scurry of the quick feet he knew so well, then Hec danced ahead, yelping, as if to encourage him. But only for a moment. Then Hec slid to a stop, whirled even as he slid, and, with a low growl, planted himself solidly in the center of the track, every hair on end as a sign of welcome to any future trouble which might follow his master.

The little fellow knew and understood. "Good old Hecy!" he half sobbed as he stumbled on.

The curve came at last. He saw Mr. Nelson pac-



ing back and forth, his hands behind his back, his head bowed. "I've got it!" he shrilled. "I've got it! Some one's chasing me."

Staggering as he came up to the man, he held out the wet and dirty envelope, but it was the boy which Mr. Nelson grabbed. "What is it?" he demanded. "Who's chasing you?"

"Back there!" Tug was so frightened he could hardly speak. "He was watching in the bushes. He told me to stand still. He wanted my envelope. Then he chased me an' Hec bit him an'— an'— an' everything."

"Joe! Nelse! All of you!" Mr. Nelson's voice rang out the rallying call in no uncertain tone. Anxiety, suspicion and imagination told him far more than Tug's broken sentences. If any desperate game was to be played, he did not wish any of these boys to be left in a position where he would have to play a lone hand. There had been enough of that. He, too, had linked those wagon tracks with the almost successful attack on Tug, but he knew far more about its probable cause, and the



grim determination of the man, or men, to drive it home, than any of the boys, even Joe or Harve, guessed. Sure that he held in his hand the thing that Sloan so wanted, his one idea was to get out of the place as quickly, and as safely, as possible.

As the Wolves rallied to his call, he took one peep into the envelope. What he saw made a grimmer light come into his eyes and he put the wet mass into his inner pocket and buttoned his coat tightly over it. "You've done fine work," he said, "fine!"

It was Joe and Alex who had come up first. Before they could be told half the story the rest of the Wolves were asking questions. Harve Foster added two and two and made four faster than he had ever done a sum in his life. Memory of his actions that night when Jim Connelly had been struck down, still rankled deep. He saw his chance to wipe off what he would always consider a blot on his record. "If there's a man up there, we want to know more about him," he said. "Come on!" He started up the track.



Joe was at his side in a flash. "Sure do!" he stated. "We've enough here to tackle him."

"Be sane, Joe!" commanded Mr. Nelson sharply. "You know enough about this to know what the risks would be."

"I'm not thinking of that, sir."

"I am. There's going to be no murder, if I can help it. You boys wouldn't have a chance. This is a man's job, and a man's job for specially trained men. What we want to do, is to get in touch with those men as quickly as possible. We're dealing with an organized gang. Can't you see that?"

"I'm beginning to think so," the boy admitted.

"They're after what Tug found, and what I've got in my pocket. No price is too high for them to pay for it. They were searching, as well as we. I suspected it when I saw those tracks. We want to get back to Gillfield. If there's only one man, we can do it; if there're more, we can find trouble without hunting for it."

Nelse started to ask a question but checked him-



self in time and leaned over to pat the panting Hec. As curious as he was, he remembered Joe's orders. It was Tug who found voice. "Let's go," he said; "let's go quick. Gillfield will look awful good to me!"



## CHAPTER XI

### OUR COUNTRY FIRST

TUG was by no means the only one to whom Gillfield "looked good" that noon. Mr. Nelson, pleased beyond words over the success of what had seemed to him scarcely more than a waste of effort, had all he could do not to tell these loyal, closed-mouthed boys the full story. As for his feelings toward little Tug, they were a mixture of thankfulness over his being alive and gratitude for what, with true New England ability to coin a word, he called his "sticktoitiveness."

As it was, he was forced to keep silent and, when they finally drew up before the bank, he dismissed the Patrol with a promise that they should hear from him within the very near future. Joe Lowell, however, was told to remain. "You've all been of such help," explained Mr. Nelson, "that I don't believe



I could get along the rest of the day without one Wolf on hand. I may need a messenger and if you could —”

“Not only can, but mighty glad to,” the boy declared promptly.

“One thing more,” Mr. Nelson announced, just as the group was about to separate. “It’s been some time since I have attended a meeting of your Patrol. I don’t want to do it as your Commissioner just now, but I do want to have a sort of reunion with you all. To-morrow night Mrs. Nelson and I would be very pleased if the Wolves would take supper with us at our home. The hour is six-thirty. I’ll try to provide a little better entertainment than I did to-day.”

There was an answering yell of delight. It was hardly the approved way of accepting a social invitation, but it told Mr. Nelson he was assured of guests. It also conveyed the information that they looked on him more as a friend than as a guiding spirit and he was decidedly pleased. “I’ll try to tell you the whole story of to-day then,” he promised. “I’m



going to ask you all to refuse to answer any questions until then, though."

"We won't."

"You can trust the Wolves."

"Can't tell what we don't know."

"But you can bet a dish of stewed prunes against a million dollars that we want to know," declared Nelse. "It's a long time till to-morrow night."

The man joined in the laughter, waved a pleased good-by and disappeared into the bank, Joe close at his heels. Hardly had he reached his desk, however, before he had taken up his telephone. Within five minutes he had been connected with Sloan at the Junction, had told him of Tug's success and been informed that Sloan would be in Gillfield as soon as a motor could get him there.

As he hung up, he turned to the boy. "It will be an hour, at least, before he arrives," he said. "You've been such a help to us all, Joe, that I don't believe they'll have any objection to your hearing the unraveling of what's left to untangle in the Stone affair. That's why I told you to stay."



“Thanks! I don’t know how I can thank you. But do you suppose we’ve got everything now? Is it all in that envelope?”

“Best way to find out is to look,” declared the man, with a happy little laugh. “Come into the directors’ room.”

Joe could hardly keep from running there. Mr. Nelson closed the door behind them, sat down at the long table and nodded to the boy to pull a chair close to his side. Then, with much care, he drew the close-folded sheets of thin paper from the muddy envelope. As he opened the damp mess, he saw that the ink had blurred in many places. “Before we do anything,” he stated, “we must dry these mighty carefully.”

“Here are some blotters.” Joe pushed forward two big ones.

“Not that way. We might do just what they want done — blur it so badly we could read nothing. We’ll have to do it very slowly and carefully. Go and tell one of the clerks to bring two desk lamps here.”



He obeyed, wondering. But a few minutes later the lamps had been connected with wall sockets and Mr. Nelson was showing him how to iron a sheet dry by rubbing a lighted incandescent globe gently over its reverse side.

It was slow work but successful. When the last sheet had been smoothed out, Mr. Nelson gathered them into a pile once more. "I think we've got what we want," he said, thumbing the papers carefully. "Now I wish I had learned to read German when in school."

"I'm curious, all right, all right," grinned the boy, "but I'm not curious enough to wish that for either of us. Never could see the sense of learning a dead language."

"There's something in that, too," chuckled the man. "Probably most of it's in code, anyway. We'll have to wait."

"Can I see it, sir?"

"Certainly."

Joe reached eagerly for the sheets. They were closely written, and he supposed that the queer-look-



ing letters were the German script. Also there were many numbers. "I guess it's code," he said. "But, look here, sir, these sheet numbers are plain enough. Look — one — three — five — seven." He turned them rapidly, pointing to the figures in the upper left-hand corner of each. "We've only got half of the original."

"You're right," admitted Mr. Nelson, making an effort to hide his disappointment. "I guess that's right. Stone must have the other half."

"And where's Stone?"

"I only wish I knew," he sighed. "It looks as if we'd only gotten half way, after all."

"But half way's a heap further than we'd gotten before," was the stout reply. "I wish you had let us take a chance for that man who chased poor old Tug."

"I didn't dare."

"The fact that he didn't follow Tug showed he was alone, sir. If there'd been two of 'em they wouldn't have been afraid to tackle us."

"I thought of that, Joe. It may mean a longer



hunt, but I believe I did the right thing in coming home at once."

The boy was so ready to run any risk, now that he believed their goal was in sight, that he could not agree with the saner policy which the man had chosen to adopt, yet his loyalty to him, as head of the Scouts, kept him from any attempt to argue over a thing already done. He sat staring at the closely written pages on the table before him, but his eyes did not see either words or figures, for his mind was busy trying to link what they might contain with the things which Henry Stone and his wife had done.

What puzzled him most was how, if the woman had deliberately thrown the envelope from the train at a certain spot, she had succeeded in telling some confederate of the act, and, further, how she could have told him, or them, where to search for the thing. If she had done this, Sloan must have been caught off his guard and, from what he had seen of Sloan, he did not believe there was great probability of that.

He was trying hard to think how it could have



happened, when the door opened quietly and Sloan himself walked in. If Joe had expected him to appear excited, he was greatly disappointed. The only outward sign was a contented smile. "Things seem to be working out well," he said, then, with a nod to Joe, "I'm thinking of joining the Boy Scouts. It seems to get you where you want to get in a way that makes my head swim. Fine work, youngster! It's becoming a habit with you."

"Here are your papers," said Mr. Nelson, pushing them across the table to him; "but I'm afraid you're rejoicing a bit prematurely. Evidently only half of the original is here."

"Half's a whole lot more than I'd any excuse to expect," was the quick reply. "With half here, it's a cinch where the other half is. They didn't have time to split more. What I can't understand, though, is why Stone didn't burn the stuff. No one but a Hun would have been chump enough to save the rope to hang himself with."

"Know where he is?"

"No. Got any ideas?"



"None."

"I have."

"What!"

Sloan smiled. "Told you last night I was through theorizing," he said, with a smile. "From now on, I produce instead of prophesy. Made anything out of this stuff yet?" He tapped the papers with his hand.

"No. Can't read them. What are you doing about the man who tried to get these away from young Wilson?"

"Nothing."

"What!" Mr. Nelson's voice plainly showed his astonishment.

"I've said it."

"But —" He wet his lips and a deep frown of disapproval appeared on his forehead. "But you've a definite clew, man," he declared. "There's not a doubt in the world about his being a confederate. He was sent out there to recover these papers. He was told they were thrown from the train and fell, not where we thought, but a quarter mile beyond the



river near a tree which rises out of a swamp. It's too evident!"

"Who told him where to find 'em?"

"Mrs. Stone, of course."

Sloan grinned. "Guess again," he advised. "Mrs. Stone's been in very select company since she stepped from that train at the Junction. She hasn't been telling fairy stories to any one but me and my men. She's a mighty poor talker, too," he added. "Injured innocence is a very pretty rôle for a woman. But don't you fool yourself about any leaks there. It was much nearer home for you."

"What do you mean?" The demand was sharp.

"I'm not ready to tell you quite yet. I don't want to make a false move, and I certainly don't want to injure a really innocent person by making a false charge."

"But you've another clew?"

"I wouldn't be afraid to put it at least as strong as that," admitted Sloan. "Did the kid get a good look at that thug?" he asked, turning to Joe.

"Guess he'll never forget him," stated the boy.



"I wouldn't, had I been in his place. Tug said he was about Mr. Nelson's height, square shouldered, heavily built, black hair, square nose and jaw and pig eyes. Then —"

"That's good enough," put in Sloan. "I know him. But you won't see him here again. He's gone to earth; knows he's marked."

"Aren't you going to look for him?" It was Joe's turn to show surprise now.

Sloan shook his head, but his eyes twinkled. "Hear you saw a little play staged once," he said; "maybe I'll ask you to see another. But it won't have the same sort of ending — unless I miss my guess."

"Sloan," said Mr. Nelson, soberly, "if I didn't know all about you, I'd think you'd gone suddenly crazy. You've got the key to the whole plot here and are not even showing an interest in these papers. I think you ought to have them translated at once. I'm going to venture to give you advice and suggest that you do so. This thing is rather vital to us here in Gillfield, at least."



“And it’s far more vital to our country, Mr. Nelson,” agreed Sloan. “I’m always ready to accept either advice or suggestions. Certainly the last thing I wish, or intend, to do, is to differ with you in any way, or over any detail. We’re both working for the same end; our methods of approach are different, that’s all. Don’t think I’m slighting anything. If I seem to, I’m doing it for reasons which seem good and sufficient to me and for which I will be entirely responsible.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Nelson, rather stiffly. “Is there anything further I can do for you, sir?”

Sloan looked at him queerly for a second, then shrugged his shoulders. “Not just now,” he retorted evenly. “We all thank you for what you did this morning. May I take these?” He picked up the papers and started for the door.

“Certainly,” Mr. Nelson agreed as he rose to follow him out into the bank.

“Can I have Joe this afternoon?” He glanced at the lad.



"You sure can!" exclaimed the boy, delighted at the idea.

"Good!" Sloan stopped half way through the banking room. "If you want me for anything, Mr. Nelson," he said, "I'll—" He stopped and looked first around at the four clerks who were watching him from behind the counters and then at the papers in his hand. "You trust every one here, of course?"

"Naturally, sir."

"That's a foolish question," stated Sloan, as if disgusted with his own inquiry. "I was only going to ease your fears by saying that I'll take these papers over to my room at the inn where I can be alone and will keep them there until I can translate them. They'll be perfectly safe."

The announcement was, seemingly, so careless that Joe was at a loss to see any reason for the formalities which preceded it. Yet he had come to look for a reason in everything. He glanced about the bank. The four behind the counters were watching Sloan with unconcealed interest, but it was the ex-



pression on young Dick Hunt's face which held his attention. There was a queer, wild look in the lad's eyes which caused Joe to glance at him a second time, only to find him bent low above his work. Sloan himself had not paid the least attention to any but Mr. Nelson. As he reached the street door, he called back a "Good day! Come on, youngster," he added; "you've got to show me that soda fountain pretty soon, or my throat will burst into flames."

But there was no thought of soda as soon as Sloan was out of sight of the bank. Before he had fairly reached the street, the papers had been carefully buttoned beneath his coat, and now, as he hurried along, his hands were thrust into his side pockets and Joe noticed that one bulged as if his fist was closed over something. "About here," announced Sloan, "is where we begin a quick pilgrimage for the Mayhew offices. If any one tries to stop me to ask questions, you drop behind me, quick. Things happen suddenly, these days."

The old tingle of excitement began to rush up



and down Joe's spine. He didn't want anything to happen. He had seen quite enough of that sort of thing to last him a life time, but he knew, from Sloan's whole attitude of constant watchfulness, that something might, at any instant, and that the man was ready for it. More and more he admired his cold nerves, yet he could not quite understand why, if there were risks, he was content to face them alone. He had completely forgotten that not three other people in Gillfield knew so much of the inside story as did he.

He had arrived at the stage where, if the expected had happened, he would have been surprised. It was for this reason that he only stopped short as they entered Mr. Mayhew's private office. There, by the window, sat the long-lost Mr. Jackson, his legs crossed comfortably, one of the old boss's cigars in his mouth. But, on the instant, he was alert. "Get 'em, Billy?" he asked, on his feet and half across the room.

"Surest thing you know!" The coat was swiftly unbuttoned and Sloan produced the papers



over which he had shown so little concern. "It isn't the full set, but it's sure some little treasure." He turned to Mr. Mayhew at the desk. "If you don't endow these Boy Scouts with a public library, or town hall, or something worth while," he announced, his eyes dancing, "the United States government will have to. They've certainly done one fine, dandy piece of work."

"Gillfield is still able to take care of herself in some ways," chuckled the old gentleman. "Apparently you're making progress."

Jackson, who was already seated at a table, poring over the papers, glanced up. "I'll stake my reputation as — as a bond salesman," he said, with a wink at Joe, "you'll be completely satisfied by sunset."

"Make it ten to-night," suggested Sloan. "I'm sorter planning a little farce for this evening."

"You're the stage manager. I've got to get to work on this stuff." He hitched his chair closer to the table and pulled the papers toward him.

Mr. Mayhew looked from one man to the other



and a satisfied smile came over his wrinkled face.

"Commandeered my office, have you?" he said.

"Any objections to my walking through my shops?"

"None in the least," Jackson assured him, with a grin. "Guess we have made ourselves at home."

"Glad of it. Owe you two a lot."

"All working for the same cause, sir."

"You're right. Come on, Joe. They don't want us."

"We're only too glad to have you, sir," stated Sloan. "We've no secrets from a Mayhew. As for this boy, I guess we might as well have it over with now." He walked up to the lad and laid a heavy hand on his shoulder. "You're under arrest," he announced.

For a moment Joe's face went white, then he laughed. "Going to shoot me at sunrise?" he asked.

From Jackson's table came a lively chuckle. "If you had as clear a conscience as that, Billy, you'd try to borrow money."



"I guess you're right," admitted Sloan. "Nevertheless, Joe, old boy, there's a little bit of truth in every joke. You're at least under detention."

"Why?" He saw there was no trace of humor in this, saw Mr. Mayhew stop suddenly in the doorway, saw Mr. Jackson watching him.

"Because it will be safer for you," answered Sloan soberly. "I think there are a number of people in and about Gillfield who would give a good deal to even a few scores with you."

"Do you mean — Would any one —" Joe's lips were dry and it began to dawn over him that he was really playing a part in a desperate game in spite of the calm, joking way these two young men treated everything.

"I do," Sloan agreed, as if reading his thoughts. "I mean more than you want to think. You're safer with us than you would be anywhere else. And I don't know how safe that is, either. The Stone gang know we've got part of the stuff. They realize what that means. They'd take any chance to get it back before it can get out of our hands."



They also know that you're largely responsible for our getting it. They're low enough to try for revenge, if they can't get more. They'll try for both."

Mr. Mayhew came back into the room. "Is that true?" he demanded.

"Every word."

The thin lips set into a thinner line. "You mean the boy's in danger?"

"If he gets far from us. Danger enough, even if he doesn't."

The big fist crashed down on the desk. "I'll not tolerate it. I've not interfered. I do now. Gillfield has given me all I have. Next to the son I have given to my country, it is closest to me. I will not risk a hair of a Gillfield boy's head to save this plant. Call off your men. I'm done."

"But, Mr. Mayhew—"

"You don't understand." Jackson was on his feet, the papers neglected.

"I understand enough," stated the old gentleman, his eyes blazing. "This boy's in danger; I'm the



cause of his being there. That's enough. I'll get him out of that danger."

Jackson wouldn't have been what he was, if he hadn't been able to think quickly. "How?" he asked calmly.

"Never failed in what I've undertaken yet."

"Then please don't begin now." It was Joe who spoke and he came close to the man and looked up into the angry eyes, fearlessly. "Please don't. You promised to let me help, to give me a chance to do my bit for my country. I've tried hard, all of us have tried hard. We've almost succeeded. Mr. Sloan and Mr. Jackson both say so. I'm not afraid. You've risked a lot; you're letting Mr. Steve risk his life; my father's in the army; don't make me give up my chance."

"He can't," said Sloan; "it's beyond him. No one can stop the secret service. This isn't a case of the individual, it's for the good of the United States."

"Of course it is," cried Joe. "What difference do I make? What do I count? If I were older,



I'm sure that you'd be the first to tell me to enlist, sir."

"But you're not 'older,' " he protested.

"The boy's right." Jackson's voice was that of an older man now. "So's Sloan. It's our country first, Mr. Mayhew."

The old gentleman looked from man to boy, then the shaggy head went up. "You're right," he agreed; "it's our country first. Good luck to you!" He wheeled and walked abruptly from the room, his shoulders back, his step firm.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE TRAP WHICH SET ITSELF

THE old boss could not have been half way across his outer office before Sloan had drawn a chair to Jackson's side. "Make yourself comfortable, Joe," he advised. "We're going to have a busy hour here. Pull up and listen, if you want."

It was the thing, above all else, that the boy did want. Having been so frankly informed that real danger was hovering so close above his head, reaction was now beginning to tell on him and he felt a cold, leaden sensation in the pit of his stomach. He knew that the one thing he must not do was to sit idle, speculating over what might happen to him, yet, as he glanced at the two eager, intelligent faces bent above their task, he could not imagine how anything, which could possibly be foreseen, could happen. Their very confidence in themselves gave him



added confidence and he quietly brought a chair to the opposite side of the table and sat down. ←

Jackson was muttering German words under his breath as he studied that first sheet of the rescued papers. Sloan had pulled a pad under his hand but his eyes were fixed on his companion's face. It was so quiet that Joe could hear the ticking of the little clock on Mr. Mayhew's desk and the low roar of the distant machinery. At last Jackson looked up. "It's mean stuff to translate, Billy," he confessed. "Most of it's in code." He ran through the rest of the papers before him. "It's the German Intelligence crowd, all right."

"Had we better try to work it out?"

"I don't know," he acknowledged frankly. "I don't know as I could. It's a bad mess — especially with every other page missing. If we had it all, I'd stay with it till we had a translation, for I'm sure it's a real haul. Look here," he said, laying a sheet between them; "this says that any messages from 176 are to be forwarded to 149 at 16. Sixteen's that old place in New York. This means that Stone



has been in communication almost directly with Berlin."

"Sure gives us the evidence we need to put away the New York crowd."

"Certainly does. It's big stuff — bigger than any of us hoped for."

"Whew!"

"I mean it," stated Jackson. "Look here." He pointed to a paragraph half down a page. "You've seen those numbers before; don't they mean anything to you now? It's the first time we've found so many of them together. Friend Stone is higher up in this thing than we've given him credit for being."

"But why should they have planted him in this little, out-of-the-way place?"

"Just because it is out of the way. I'd like to see his mail for the past six months."

"I saw it last night," retorted Sloan sorrowfully. "It was in ashes. Hang it all, why didn't you have him put away on suspicion for that Connelly business! You saw enough to be sure of your man."



"Wouldn't have had this, if I had."

"Right! Guess I'm letting my disappointment make me thick. What we want's the other half of these papers."

"We're not the only ones who are worrying about the missing half," observed Jackson.

"I've been working on that line for the past two hours," Sloan confessed. "If this stuff is as dangerous to them as you say, it looks like a good bet for us."

"They'd never have a better chance than here," agreed Jackson thoughtfully. "They'd certainly never have the nerve to try it in New York or Washington. I don't especially want to be sand-bagged, shot up or found with my throat slit, but I'd gladly take a chance at all of them, if I thought I could land this gang and their line of communications."

"Knew you would. That's why I've done what I've have."

"What's that?"

For three minutes Sloan explained his plan and plot while Jackson listened, nodding agreement and



approval, and Joe Lowell caught his breath at almost every other word. He knew that these two were brave, but he had never before supposed two men could deliberately put their necks into a noose and do it with a smile.

"There're only two weak links," confessed Jackson at last. "One is the boy, the other's taking it for granted Stone and his crowd are still hanging around here."

"I'm sure of the kid." Sloan's eyes snapped. "I never saw guilt stamped plainer on any face. He's been terrorized into it in some way. As for Stone and his crowd, we know they're still around somewhere, or some of the rest would have picked them up. We took care of that end last night. Every line of escape is closed for him. Besides that, we're sure some of them were after these papers this morning. Young Wilson saw Schwartz."

"If I were sure they were still here, that they weren't trying to get off in an automobile, I'd be with you."

"But they can't get away, I tell you."



"I'm not so sure."

"But it's the only chance," argued Sloan.

"We'll take it, of course," agreed Jackson, as calmly as if it were merely a suggestion for supper. "But, if it doesn't work, we've wasted a lot of valuable time. If I could only be sure there were some of them still here, I'd be keen for it. Hang that telephone!" he exclaimed impatiently, as the bell rang insistently for the fourth time. "Answer it, Joe. Tell 'em Mr. Mayhew's gone home."

"Hold on!" Sloan was on his feet. "It may be for us."

"No one knows we're here, do they?"

"They're not supposed to." He picked up the receiver. "Mr. Mayhew's office," he growled. "Ha — hum —! Who is this? — Oh! All right. — No, he isn't here. — Good-by."

He put down the instrument and turned to the boy. "Joe," he commanded sharply, "call up your mother and find out if she's hunting for you."

It took but a moment for the lad to learn that Mr. Nelson had been to the Lowell home an hour



before to assure Mrs. Lowell her son was all right and might stay with him, or Mr. Mayhew, until late that evening. She had not dreamed of calling him.

Sloan returned to the table, his mouth grim. "That settles it," he stated. "Young Hunt, at the bank, telephoned that Mrs. Lowell wanted Joe at home at once."

"But she didn't," declared the boy. "She said she didn't."

He saw the two men look at each other. "What is it?" he asked, his voice shaking.

"Nothing," retorted Jackson; "just a mistake."

"It — it — It's some of that gang after me."

"Not a bit like it!" lied Sloan, with a cheery laugh. "Just some chump trying to find out what all three of us are doing down here in Mr. Mayhew's office."

"I'm not afraid," stated the boy stoutly.

"We know that." He turned to Jackson. "Had we better go ahead with my plan?" he asked.

"Yes."

There was no hesitancy in Jackson's voice, or



manner, now. As well as Sloan, he knew the full meaning of that attempt to lure Joe Lowell out of the Mayhew plant. He, too, knew what all three might have to face. His only regret was that they had allowed this boy to become so enmeshed. But it was no time to consider the individual.

It took him less than three minutes to locate Mr. Mayhew out in the plant. As they came back into the office, Jackson strode to the table and, picking up the papers, held them out. "Mr. Mayhew," he said, "these things are far more important than we had any cause to expect. They're safe with you, because no one will suspect that you have them. Will you go down to the bank, put them in your private box and keep them there until I can get them, or send some one who will act for me?"

"Certainly."

"Can you let me have five or six sheets of paper this same size?"

The old boss walked to his desk and began a hasty search. "Send for some," he said; "none here."



"Had you just as soon go yourself, sir?" Sloan spoke quickly.

"Yes. Course." The old gentleman stalked out of the room. He had not run errands for many years but now he did so willingly, and Joe learned a lesson about not being curious over other people's affairs.

He came back while the boy was still marveling at his docility, and, without a word, laid a package of thin paper on the table. It was Sloan who ripped it open and took what he wanted. Then, without further explanations, he dug the still soggy envelope Tug Wilson had found, out of the waste basket, stuffed the blank sheets into it and snapped a heavy rubber band about the package.

"It's only fair to tell you, Mr. Mayhew," he said, as he folded the real papers and handed them to him, "that these are a dangerous keep-sake. I'd get them out of my hands as soon as I could."

"Understand. Don't worry about me. What are you going to do with that boy?"

"Take him with us."



"Is it absolutely necessary?"

"We think it best."

"Very well." He nodded gravely. "But understand this," he added, "I hold you responsible for his safety."

"That's why we're taking him with us. Should anything unforeseen occur, Chief O'Connor will notify you. There may be some unpleasant incidents in the town before morning. Don't permit it to worry you." Jackson picked up his hat. "All ready, Billy?"

"Strike up the band!" answered Sloan, his eyes dancing at the thought of action at last. "I'll take the bait." He grabbed the envelope with the fake papers from his companion but, to Joe's surprise, did not put it in his pocket. "It pays to advertise," he chuckled, as he noted the lad's look of astonishment. "Forward, the Light Brigade! Good-by, Mr. Mayhew. Thanks for all you've done."

"You look out for that boy."

"We will. Come on!" Sloan caught Joe by the arm and led him through the outer office.



As they reached the street, Jackson came hurrying after them and fell into step on the boy's other side. "We're making a mountain out of a mole hill," he said. "No one — not even a crazy Hun — would be chump enough to start anything in broad day in a public street."

"Course they wouldn't," agreed Sloan; "that's why we're walking. All we expect — and want — is to be seen. From now on, this is my party. I believe I'll blow you both to a soda. I promised Joe one."

The boy was thoroughly mystified. Sloan's high spirits made him feel more comfortable. He didn't know that the prospect of risk was acting as a tonic on the man. Jackson, too, seemed not to have a care in the world. They laughed and talked like two boys on their way to a circus. Even in the drug store, they appeared to pay no attention to any one, or anything, around them. Had he not known how important was the work they had in mind, he would have thought himself the victim of an exaggerated practical joke.



But, if the two had mystified him, both at the drug store and on their way through the town, Sloan staggered him as he led the way into the inn and marched up to the desk. "Want a room for myself and friend for the night," he said, in a loud voice. "Good room, too. Quiet and not high up. 'Fraid of fire in these small towns. Give us a room on a fire escape, if you've one handy."

"Yes, sir. Will you register?"

"Sure thing!"

To Joe's utter amazement, Sloan wrote "Washington, D. C." after both their names. It seemed as if he might fairly be inviting any trouble that might be around. "And don't forget that fire escape," he warned, as he put down the pen.

"Have to give you a room at the back of the house, then, Mr. Sloan."

"Suits me. Quieter there — if you don't keep chickens. Don't keep chickens, do you? I hope not!"

"No, sir."

"Fine! My friend, Mr. Jackson, is terribly sore



on chickens. Break his slumber, and all that sort of thing."

The clerk looked up at Jackson. "You've been with us before, I think," he said.

"That's so. Bond business is all shot to pieces these days."

"What house are you traveling for?"

"His firm says he's traveling for pleasure, not for them," grinned Sloan. "Let's get upstairs; I've a heap of stuff to attend to. By the way," he called back, "if any one should happen to ask for either of us, we're out. Understand?"

"Certainly, Mr. Sloan."

"Come on, Joe; you stick with us. Maybe we'll have another errand for you to run. You're a handy sort."

The three followed a bell boy to the second floor and down a long hall to a big room at the back of the inn. Sloan's first act was to go to the window and look for the fire escape. It was there, as promised. His next was to raise all the curtains. "That's all, boy," he said to the attendant. "We'll



ring, if we want anything. Where's the telephone?" ←

"At the head of the bed."

"All right."

As the door closed, Sloan slipped out of his coat and Joe saw the butt of an automatic peering out of his hip pocket. "See that innocent chap, who looked like a cheese drummer, sitting in the far corner of the office, Joey?" he asked.

"No."

"Too bad! May see him yet. Always pays to keep your eyes open, youngster."

"But you didn't even seem to look around."

"No?" Sloan laughed. "I do my looking round on the way into a room," he confessed. "This thing's going to work like a charm, Jackson, old dear. They've got us located for fair and they know I'm simp enough to have brought their dear little secrets here to solve in the privacy of my little pink boudoir. Oh, heavens, how are we ever going to kill time from now till midnight! I haven't even got a magazine."



"There's a news stand downstairs," suggested Joe. "Send for some."

"Hardly! We're very busy men, old feller me lad. We're tryin' to read German."

"Can I ask a question?" It was five minutes later and Joe was on the edge of the bed while the two men were seated at the table and, apparently, very busy over some intricate paper work.

"All you want. It will be a pleasant relief. I've drawn two ships and a perfectly lovely barn, but I don't seem to care for either of 'em."

"Then, if you think one of the Stone gang's downstairs, why don't you arrest him?"

"Quite so!" Sloan looked up and nodded gravely. "A perfectly intelligent query, my dear sir, perfectly so. That is, it would be, if I were a policeman. But I'm not. Besides that, he's going to be very kind to us. He's going to tell the man we want, that we're here, that we have his papers and that all he has to do is come get 'em. He's a sort of private messenger — only he doesn't know it."



“ But how do you know that? ”

The laughter left Sloan's eyes. “ I don't know it, Joe,” he confessed. “ I'm just guessing. It's all I can do. I've had quite a bit of experience with the Hun and I'm counting on this crowd's running true to form. It's a guessing match, but I'm going to try to out-guess them. It's like baseball with a man on third and one out. The squeeze play's the natural thing to expect. The Hun never does the unexpected. He's not trained to think, or to be original. He's trained to do the obvious thing in the obvious way. That's his idea of showing might is right.”

“ But suppose three or four of them came up here and tried to kill you two.”

“ They're not advertising,” promptly retorted Sloan. “ Anything they pull will be mighty quiet.”

The boy shook his head dolefully. “ I don't understand it at all,” he said. “ I don't see why you don't arrest them as you come across them, one at a time.”

“ If we picked one up — blooie! The rest would



vanish into thin air. We want the rest of those papers and Stone. If we could locate Stone —” He laughed grimly. “You wouldn’t have any cause to complain.”

“How many of ’em are there here?”

“Dunno,” retorted Sloan carelessly, as he once more made himself busy with nothing at all. “Maybe two, maybe three. The more the merrier.”

It was utterly incomprehensible to the boy. As the late afternoon dragged slowly away he became more and more uneasy. For six weeks he had worked hard, had built suspicion into theory and theory into certainty but now, with results almost in sight, these two men, who were experts in the work he had attempted, appeared to be throwing away all the fruits of the work already done. If ever a plan seemed foolish, it was the one they were putting into action. Joe did not mind being a part of a trap, but he did object to being the cheese.

Jackson insisted that they have their supper brought up to the room. It helped to kill another hour, but it also did more. It started Sloan telling



stories of the work he had done in the past two years. Joe was fascinated. He had read some detective tales, but this was his first peep behind real scenes. Sloan's modest way of relating things added to the excitement of each succeeding story and, somehow or other, revived the boy's confidence in him. Night, too, played its part. The curtains before the windows were drawn tight now and many things seemed more possible than they had in broad day.

It was well after eight when the telephone began to ring violently. Joe was on his feet in a flash but Sloan's hand fell on his shoulder. "Never mind that," he said, with a queer smile.

"But some one wants us."

"And I told the clerk we were out," Sloan reminded him. "Some one doesn't believe him. Ever go fishing?"

"Yes. But what's that got to do with a telephone call?"

"Nothing much, perhaps. When you've been fishing, ever have a bite?"



“Why, yes — Oh!” It was a long-drawn exclamation. Joe saw the light — or, at least, thought he caught its glimmer.

“Oh!” Sloan was a good mimic and his eyes were dancing. “You see, inaction tells on others, as well as on you, Joe. We’re not the ones who are worrying. No one in the world’s got a thing on us and we’ve more time than we know what to do with.”

“But if they want to find out if we’re here, they’ll come up,” argued the boy.

“Oh, no. They’ll send the bell boy. They’re not taking that chance so early in the game.”

Almost before he had finished speaking, they heard some one running down the hall, and the next instant there was a sharp knock at the door. Jackson grinned appreciatively. In two strides he was at the door and had thrown it open. “See here,” he said sharply, “we gave orders that we were not to be disturbed and told the clerk to say that we were not in to visitors. We meant that. You go back and tell him so. And go quick.”



“ But — ”

“ You go ! ” snapped Jackson. He slammed the door and returned to his chair. “ Gee, but I hate to bully kids ! ” he exclaimed. “ What’s the next act in your play, Billy ? ”

“ It’s the dear old midnight robbery stuff,” Sloan sighed, stretching his arms over his head and yawning. “ They’ve located us; they know we’ve put nothing in the hotel safe; they think what they want is here in this room. Therefore, with the really artistic deductions of a sleuth — which thing I am not — they will come get ’em. They may try the door, but I think that fire escape is going to prove too tempting.”

“ It’s too crude ! ” declared Jackson.

“ It’s what’ll happen.”

“ Are you going to stay here quietly and allow people, who you yourselves say don’t care what happens to them, to try to break in here ? ” asked Joe, his eyes wide.

“ What do you suppose we’ve been sitting here all this time for ? ”



"I give up! For pure, cold nerve, you fellows are world beaters!"

"It isn't nerve," grinned Sloan. "I've told you it was just out-guessing the Hun. It's all just part of the day's work. Hello! What's that?"

The boom of a great whistle shook the windows and, an instant later, was followed by the jangle of bells. From the distant street, they heard sharp, excited shouts. "Fire!" exclaimed the boy. "It's the fire whistle on the Mayhew plant."

"Mean a fire there?" Sloan's voice was sharp.

"No. Might be anywhere in town."

"Oh!" His whole bearing changed as he looked at Jackson and began to laugh. "Do you get it?" he asked.

"No. Can't say I do."

"Maybe I'm wrong. Don't think so. They're more clever than I thought. They're drawing the crowd to the front, and away from our fire escape." He whipped his automatic from his pocket, took a quick look at the loaded clip, slipped on his coat and then dropped the gun into a side pocket. "It's a



good play," he said coldly. "I'm going to the front of the house and take a look — see? It's what they want us both to do. We'll accommodate 'em by half. I'll be where I can back you up best, old man. Keep your eye on the windows."

From the street came louder shouts, then the clanging of the fire department. "I'm still hitting the bull's-eye with my guesses," stated Sloan, as he opened the door. "That thing's about across the street. It will draw a crowd and all the attention. Clever!" he repeated. "Didn't give 'em credit for such cleverness."

"Think that's it?" Jackson's voice expressed not a trace of excitement.

"Fits in close with my ideas. So long!" He slipped out into the hall and ran toward the front of the house. But when he got to the distant window, he took but a quick glance at the crowd below. He could see no smoke. He did not look for flame. In a flash, he came tip-toeing to the open door.

Jackson, even though he had far less faith in his associate's theory, had acted with equal swiftness.



Before Joe knew what had happened, the lights were snapped out. The boy, still seated on the edge of the bed, felt a hand on his shoulder. "Come," commanded the man.

"Don't you want me to watch the door?"

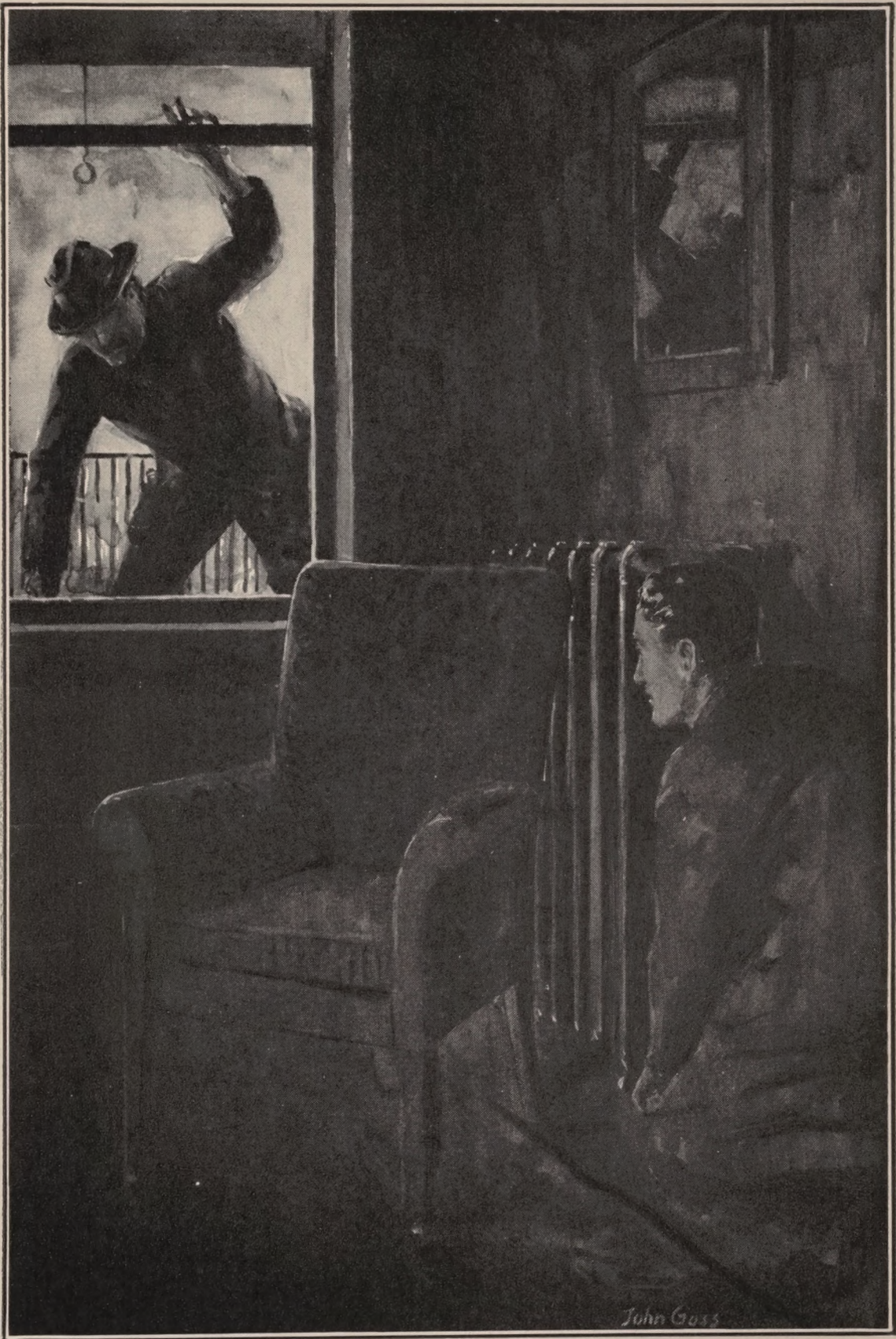
"No. Sloan's there. Remember where the radiator was? Sit down on the floor by it."

"But I'm not afraid. I want to help."

"Do as you're told." Jackson's voice was low, but there was no mistaking the insistence in its command.

Joe obeyed. He heard a curtain gently raised, saw the lighter spot where the window opened in the wall. Jackson himself was not to be seen. The room was utterly silent. From out in the distant street came the sound of shouts and the clanging of new gongs as the apparatus from a distant station arrived. The boy, crouched on the floor, felt as if he were reading an impossible detective story backward. It was all happening in such perfect accord with Sloan's theories that he did not think anything could surprise him now. But, before





“ THE LOW-CROUCHING FIGURE ON THE FIRE ESCAPE MOVED  
SWIFTLY NOW ”







the thought was well settled in his mind, his heart was in his throat. In the dim light outside the window, he saw the shadow of a man.

Joe's nails sank into the palms of his hands. He wanted to scream. He wanted to warn Jackson. He wanted to do anything. He had been told that this gang was desperate. Here was one who was so desperate that he was forcing the issue. If he had seen attempted murder done on Connelly, he realized he would see the real thing now, should Jackson make a false move.

He heard the window shake, the soft rasp of wood on wood as the sash was raised. The low-crouching figure on the fire escape moved swiftly now. A leg came over the sill, the body followed. Joe heard the soft thud as the man's feet touched the carpet. A moment's absolute silence, then the bright white beam of a flashlight shot across the room and struck him full in the face.

"Uh!" The exclamation was one of utter surprise. The man had not expected to find the room occupied. That was evident from the second's



wavering of the light. But, in that second, something cold and round was pressed against the side of his head.

“Drop that gun, Stone!” Jackson commanded coldly. “The game’s up.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WOLVES HOWL

WHEN Joe Lowell tumbled into bed that night, he expected to be asleep almost as his head connected with the pillows. He was physically tired out, but there was one more new experience due him. He tried to count the sheep as they jumped through the gate, one after the other; he tried to forget the sheep by counting from one to ten over and over again. He tried the multiplication tables and he tried the alphabet, but always the blanched face of Henry Stone peered at him from the shadows. The reaction from such a day as he had spent made him toss and turn, living again through each long hour and each exciting second.

Even now that it was all over, he could not fully appreciate all he had done, even with the memory of Sloan's enthusiasm and Jackson's sober, sincere words vivid in his mind. The last quick tableau in



the inn's back room was burned into his brain for all time. Never before had he seen an abject coward. He had thought Stone as brave as he was daring but, when he had witnessed his utter collapse, heard his whimpering, whining, full confession and seen him crouched, sniveling and handcuffed, in the corner of the room, he had become sickened with it all and had been glad when told that everything was over and that he could go home.

Sloan and Jackson had done everything with a cool calmness which excited his admiration beyond words. Even when the other pages of the missing papers were found in Stone's clothes, there had been no sign of triumph on the face of either man. As they had told him over and over again, it had all been in the day's work. Joe knew that even now the man whom Sloan had called the "cheese drummer" was in a cell next to Stone in the police station, knew that Sloan was rushing to New York, so that other arrests could be made in the morning, knew that what had been the Stone gang was the Stone gang no longer and that he, Joe Lowell, had



been mainly responsible for breaking up a Hun plot which was to have crippled many a plant besides that of the Mayhews.

Sleep came at last. Had he not been so exhausted, he would have dreamed of raiding German trenches, of repelling Zeppelin raids alone in a Spad, of doing all sorts of things almost as impossible as what he had accomplished in his waking hours. But, as it was, he was awake before it seemed that his eyes had closed. Yet the sunlight was bright in his room and his mother was calling him to breakfast.

His first thought was to find Harve and check up all the points in the story with him. But he remembered that Fat must be already at work in the plant. He thought of hunting up Tug but, before he could quite decide what to do, Chief O'Connor appeared with the information that Mr. Jackson wanted him to come to the station at once.

It was because of this that Harve, foregoing his dinner for the first time in his life, failed to locate him that noon. The big fellow was teeming with



curiosity. He knew something had happened. All Gillfield knew that. But, like the rest of Gillfield, he didn't know what it was, although he suspected more than most.

Half way through the afternoon, he almost made up his mind to go to Mr. Mayhew's office and ask for news. Could he have caught a glimpse of the old boss's face as he sat at his desk, the boy would have gone without hesitating but, as it was, his courage failed him for the second time and he stuck to his post in the distant corner of the yard till the evening whistle blew.

Then he tore himself from his job with all the speed of a boy who had remembered two very important things — firstly, that he had had no dinner; secondly, that he had been invited out to supper. There was a certain fitness between the two that appealed most strongly to Fat.

He was frankly panting when he rang the bell at the Nelsons'. He hoped the Scout Commissioner would take this as a compliment and overlook the fact that he was almost a minute late. Whatever



were his host's feelings, however, Harve had no cause for complaint over the heartiness of his reception. "Well, well, Harvey," he said, "we're surely glad to see you. The rest are here, and we're hoping Mrs. Nelson has supper ready for us."

Harvey wanted to be most polite, but there was a look in the man's eyes which tempted him to be natural. "I'm hoping so, too," he confessed. "Honestly, I'm starved."

"Good enough! Come in and see the fellows." He led the way through the sitting-room and out onto the big veranda overlooking a pretty garden. Hammocks, deep pillowed couches and long, low comfortable chairs, made the place most attractive, but what appealed to Harve was the sight of Joe in the big settee-swing. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "Thought you'd vanished into thin air."

"So did the rest of us," chimed in Alex. "Most of us have been hunting him."

"Ought to put Hec on his trail, eh, Tug?" grinned Fat. "Where is the fish hound, anyway?"

"Left him home."



"Too bad! Nick might go to sleep again."

"That's all right," agreed Nick, with a wry smile. "I fell down. I'm not trying to find any alibi. Tug sure saved us all."

"You're right, he did!" declared Joe. "Tug's a wonder. He's going to get —"

"Never mind what he's going to get in the distant future," interrupted Mr. Nelson; "you're all going to get something to eat now. We thought it would be pleasanter to have supper out here. If you'll go into the dining-room, Mrs. Nelson will serve you and then you can come back here and eat."

"Fine!"

"Yes, sir."

"You sure know how to give parties, Mr. Nelson."

It was just as their host and hostess had wanted it to be. The boys felt at home and there was no sign of formality or embarrassment. Mrs. Nelson had always been a favorite with them all and, this evening, she proved to be jollier than ever.

Mr. Nelson, too, was having fully as good a time



as any of the boys. The last plates had been taken into the house when he leaned forward on the sofa. "You know I'm sorry," he declared, "that I've never known the Wolf Patrol as well as I should have. It didn't seem to need much attention from me and that's why I've missed a whole lot of fun."

"There's no reason you should miss any more," stated Fat heartily. "We sure enjoy being with you and you're always welcome at our meetings, especially as a fellow Scout, and not as the Commissioner."

"Don't want me as Commissioner, then?" laughed the man.

"Take you any way you'll come," cried Alex.

"Only come often," urged Ned Field. "You see, we haven't got Mr. Steve now and old Joe has hard work keeping us in line."

"Doesn't look much like it," retorted Mr. Nelson. "You've what can be called a happy patrol."

"Don't have many scraps, that's true," admitted Alex. "We've been together so long we know each other."



"Ever think of taking in more members?"

"I should say not!"

"No, sir."

"This is some close corporation."

"We've full membership."

"I'd allow you an additional member," said the man slowly.

"No, thanks."

"Nothin' doin'!"

"Don't want him."

"Who've you got in mind, sir?"

"Joe is leader," retorted Mr. Nelson. "I'm rather sorry you feel this way. I'll let him talk."

"Go ahead, Joe."

"What's up?"

"If you don't mind," said the Commissioner, getting on his feet, "I'll stroll into the house. This is a patrol affair. Make yourselves at home. I'll be within call, if you want me." With that he went in, leaving a surprised crowd of boys looking at each other.

"What's the matter?" muttered Fat.



"Say," grunted Stan, "if I'd supposed it was going to be some sort of trap, I wouldn't have come."

"Me, either."

"As if we were going to take in any other guy!"

"Nothin' doin', nothin' doin' a-tall!" Tug declared.

"Slow up!" warned Joe quietly. "I don't think you fellows mean all you say and don't say anything you've got to take back."

"What's up?"

"Are you part of this plant?"

"We didn't think it of you!"

The chorus was openly disappointed.

"I didn't think it of myself, until I really took time to think," confessed the boy. "This isn't a plant. I'm quite as much responsible as Mr. Nelson. We both want you fellows to consider it, that's all."

"Suppose you explain," said Ned impatiently.

"I'll try to — if you'll be still."

"Call the meeting to order," advised Harve.

"I don't want any patrol meeting — yet. I just



want to tell you a story. There's a good deal happened here in Gillfield during the past few weeks," he began, "and it all centers about Henry Stone. He was arrested last night by the secret service for being a German spy."

"Whew!"

"Great Scott!"

"You'll be more surprised when you hear the whole story," he stated. "Let me finish my part. The papers we were sent out to find yesterday were not the bank's, but Stone's instructions from Germany. He had half of them, his wife the other half. She threw hers off the train when she knew she had been spotted. Fat is responsible for locating her in the plot."

"Gee!"

"Bully for you, Harve!"

"Holy smoke!"

"And we never even guessed! Say, Tug, you had some close call, old boy!"

"He did," agreed Joe. "If it hadn't been for Hec, 'most anything might have happened. But



that's another part. What I want to tell you, is that all those papers were in Stone's box at Mr. Nelson's bank. Orders had been given that Stone was not to go to that box without Mr. Nelson's being told at once. Stone was suspected, you see, and we — they were watching him. Well, anyway, Mrs. Stone went there day before yesterday, got the papers and tried to escape. Dick Hunt let her into the box and did not tell about her having been there."

"Why not?"

"Because," answered Joe gravely, "because Dick was working with the Stone gang."

"Dick!"

"Joe, do you mean Dick Hunt's a traitor?" Harve's face was white.

"They ought to hang him," exploded Nelse; "that's what they ought to do to him."

"There's more than that, fellows." Joe's voice was quiet, but there was a deep note of feeling in it. "The secret service men suspected him. They don't overlook anything. They laid a trap for him yesterday afternoon. Said where they were going,



so Dick could hear. And he got word to Stone. He's owned up to everything. There's lot more. He even acted as a messenger from Mrs. Stone to a man named Schwartz. Told him she'd throw the papers off the train where Tug found them."

"What's all this got to do with us?" demanded Ned. "Do they want us to lynch Hunt? If that's the idea, I'm game."

"No. The night Jim Connelly was almost murdered — Stone was the man who did it," he threw in. "He's confessed that — a coat and hat were found in the yard nearby. Neither O'Connor nor the secret service people could find out who they belonged to until Stone owned up. They were old ones of his. He'd put 'em on, sneaked out of his house and laid for Connelly to rob him of the gauges. But Jackson, who, even then, was trailing him, was too quick. Stone had to run. His only chance was to double on his tracks. He threw away the coat and hat as he ran, jumped into the window of his own house and, a minute later, rushed out of the front door and up to us with what



he supposed would be a complete alibi. He bluffed all through that night. He thought he was safe. But he wanted a man in the bank, too. Next day he hunted up Dick and told him he knew that the hat and coat belonged to Dick's father. He told Dick he would tell the police, unless he did just as he was told. You know old Hunt, every one does. He was drunk that night, just as he always is — drunk and uglier than ever. Dick was ready to believe anything. But he's his father. Anyway, Stone scared him into promising, and, once he had him, he saw to it that he got him in deeper and deeper. Dick told us the whole story this morning. He broke down completely and just sobbed and sobbed. Gee, it was awful! Stone had sworn to cut his throat, if he didn't do exactly as he was told."

"Rather late to do the baby act," growled Alex. "They oughter shoot him. We're at war."

"That's exactly what I thought at first. Never did know Dick very well. Anyway, I said what I thought and said it pretty plainly. The worst part



of it all was that Dick listened to every word and then said he didn't blame me a bit, said he was all I thought and then some."

"Hope you gave it to him good and plenty," growled Fat.

"I did," Joe acknowledged with a sickly smile. "Then I got mine. Mr. Nelson landed on me first. He told me something about Dick Hunt I didn't know — how he'd always had to work to keep his mother from going hungry, how he had tried to straighten out old man Hunt and how Mrs. Hunt stuck by her husband, in spite of everything. They're really happy, when the old man's sober. It was on account of his mother that Dick tried to protect his father. Possibly some of us would have done the same," he suggested.

"Not to help the Huns, we wouldn't," declared Ned emphatically.

"Dick didn't know about that part," retorted Joe. "Sloan and Jackson are sure of that. It was Jackson who gave me my second call down. It was worse than the other. Gee! I've always been



scared to death at the very words 'secret service,' but now I've learned to know that it's about the finest thing in the world. Mr. Jackson told me they had enough on Dick to do anything with him. Whatever was done, would brand him for all time. But he says he's only a victim; he wants him to have another chance. Stone's going to pay for what he's done, don't worry about that, but Dick's only a kid. He didn't realize what he was doing. They want him to stay here and learn to be a man. Jackson says that what he's been through will help to make him a better one. He wants us to help him. Both he and Mr. Sloan believe in Scouting. They want us to take Dick Hunt into the Wolves and help put him on his feet."

"Whew!"

"Don't know Sloan or Jackson," growled Alex.  
"Never did like Hunt."

"They're all right!" Fat declared. "Finest ever! I'm game, Joe. I think it would be real Scout work. Dick's really only a victim. He's just played in hard luck."



"I'll do whatever you say," Tug agreed, loyally.

"I want you all to do as you think best."

"Let's think it over," suggested Ned cautiously.

"Let's think nothin' over!" Joe was more than surprised when Nick came to his feet. "I'm keen for this. It's Scouting with a big S. Where'd I have been yesterday, where'd any of us been, if Tug hadn't been a good Scout and done the work I neglected? None of us would have found those papers; Stone would have gotten them and gotten away; Dick Hunt would have grown up into a crook. Scouting saved this whole thing, I tell you. Can't you see it? It's helped us to help others. Talk about your good deed every day! Why, here we've got the chance to be doing one every second of every minute of every hour of every day. I'm for it. I vote for Dick Hunt."

"So do I."

"Me, too." Fat and Tug spoke together.

"I believe I'm with you," Stan announced. "I know I am."

Alex looked at the other three who had remained



silent. "Four have voted for him, fellows," he said, thoughtfully. "We four make it a tie. The Wolves have never split yet. I don't like Hunt, but I do like Nick's idea. What do you say?"

"That the idea's good," declared Ned. "It's Scouting. The vote isn't four to four, it's unanimous."

"I thought it would be," Joe said with a contented sigh. "One thing about the Wolves — they always play the game."

"You bet we do!"

"When you show us the way, old man."

"It's a pretty wise old gray wolf," laughed Fat, rumpling Joe's hair and giving his ear a savage tug. "Pretty crafty old boy, ain't you, Joey?"

"I'm a pretty happy one, I don't mind telling you," he confessed. "I think we ought to tell Mr. Nelson."

"I'll go and find him," Harve volunteered.

"Keep out of the pantry," Nelse chuckled. "You ate all the cake."

"I didn't," the big fellow grinned. "There was



one piece left. I looked at it a long time. I could have chewed it, but I never could have swallowed it."

With a wave of his hand, as if to show that his confession closed the argument, he started into the house but, as he was going through the long window, he met Mr. Nelson coming out. "Just going for you, sir," he said. "The Wolves have elected Dick Hunt a member of the Patrol."

"Splendid!" The man stood in the window and glanced from face to face. "Splendid!" he repeated. "The best part of it all is that not one of you has disappointed me. You've shown your true colors again. But that isn't what I came to say," he went on. "Come into my library. I've a little surprise for you."

"What is it?" they chorused.

"If you knew, it wouldn't be a surprise," he retorted. "Come along."

They obeyed, and the first part of that surprise was an empty but comfortable room. "Sit down, every one," ordered Mr. Nelson, taking a seat in the



bay window. "Joe, sit there by the table. You've had an informal meeting of the Wolves, now I want you to hold a formal one."

"Why?"

The gray eyes twinkled. "Being Scout Commissioner, I'm not used to having my orders questioned by most patrols."

Joe's heels came together and his hand snapped up in salute. But his lips, too, twitched as he turned to his friends. "Meeting will come to order," he declared. "There being no minutes, nor reports, they will be dispensed with. There being no flag in the Scout Commissioner's headquarters, the usual ceremonies will be omitted. The meeting, being a special one called at the verbal order of the District Scout Commissioner, is now turned over to the District Scout Commissioner. Scouts, Commissioner Nelson is in the chair."

Even Mr. Nelson roared. He was keen to enjoy a well-turned joke even if turned against himself. "Very well," he said. "I appoint Joe, Harvey and Nelse as a special committee of three to go into the



sitting-room and bring what they find in there in here."

"Come on, fellows!" This was the sort of meeting Nelse could enjoy. He saw much fun ahead. He rushed out of the room, the other two close at his heels.

A moment later they heard a sharp exclamation of surprise and a confused "Beg pardon, sir! I didn't know it was you." Then the three, Nelse, in particular being smileless and red of face, came marching back, escorting the old boss.

Apparently Mr. Mayhew was having a far more enjoyable time than the headlong and still rattled special committee, for a smile was playing around the corners of the usually grim mouth. "Good evening," he rumbled.

Had Henry Stone come suddenly into the room, the boys could have been no more surprised. The old boss was not noted for sociability in his bailiwick and, certainly, his appearing like a clap of thunder at a boys' party was undreamed of. Yet he was anything but ill at ease in his strange surroundings.



He took a comfortable chair near the table, crossed one gaunt leg over the other and peered out from under the bushy brows.

"It is hardly necessary, sir," said Mr. Nelson, "to introduce you to the Wolf Patrol. However, I believe you wish to speak to its members. Scouts, I introduce Mr. Mayhew."

The boys didn't know whether they were expected to applaud or not. Under the circumstances, and believing they knew the old gentleman, they merely nodded like automatons. Mr. Mayhew emitted a short, sharp grunt. "Most of 'em seem to know me," he stated, then turned to his audience.

"Always have had one rule in business," he began; "don't write anything you can say and don't say it, if you can help it. Good rule. Going to live up to it now." He thrust a bony hand into a pocket and drew out a small box. "I've told some of you I never had much use for the Scouts," he began again. "We never grow too old to learn. It's because I've learned, that I asked Mr. Nelson to allow me to come and act for him to-night. Yes-



terday one of you boys did a very fine thing. He discovered something which was most important. He discovered it because he was persistent and faithful. There are no finer characteristics. His faithfulness placed him in grave danger — how grave, he will never know. He met the test. It is for that reason I have requested the privilege of coming here to pin the Scout Medal of Honor on the coat of James Wilson."

"Oh! Oh!" Little Tug's eyes filled with quick tears and his knees trembled as much as his lips.

"Yea!" Joe's sharp cry started them all. Even Mr. Nelson was on his feet, clapping his hands.

"Tug! Tug!" shouted Nick. "Good old Tug!"

"And the first Medal of Honor ever given in this district, too," triumphed Fat. "You can't beat the Wolves!"

"Please, sir," stammered the little chap, "I didn't do anything. This ought to go to Hec."

Even Mr. Mayhew's eyes grew a bit dim as he fumbled with the medal he was pinning on the little



gray jacket. "I think Hec will enjoy your having it as much as we all will. I congratulate you, my boy." He grasped a limp hand and shook it heartily. "Now," he said, "I'll retire and let Mr. Nelson tell the rest. I've talked enough."

"The rest?"

"Is there more?"

"You'll do your own talking," laughed Mr. Nelson. "This is Mayhew Night with the Wolves."

"All right," he agreed; "beginning to like to talk."

In short, crisp sentences he told how Joe and Harvey had gone to him at the time of the Liberty Loan, how he had held out the first promise for Camp Stephen Mayhew and of how they had been the first to arouse his suspicion of Henry Stone. From the coming of the secret service operatives to Gillfield, through all the incidents of the Connelly affair, and on through the final capture of the previous day, he held them spellbound. Even Joe learned of things of which he had not dreamed. The old gentleman had never had such an audience.



He began to enjoy speaking. He had expected to say only a little; he found himself neglecting no detail and the chorus of "Ohs!" and "Gees!" grew more and more intense.

"You've all played your parts in this," he went on. "You've done your bit. It's been a big bit. I've watched you all. Gillfield has been the dearest thing in my life. Its future means much to me. That future rests with you. You and your friends are the coming leaders of the town. I think you will be able to do more for Gillfield than I have done. If two or three of you have played a larger part in what has happened, it was because these two or three were given the larger opportunity. I like to think that. I know those three will be generous enough to let an old man have his fancies."

He stopped to glance from boy to boy. Nelse Pease could stand it no longer. "We'd have tried, sir," he said, in a husky voice. "We'd have done our best, but none of us could have done what Joe has done."

"That's right!"



"Joe did it all."

"Give Joe the credit."

There was no mistaking the genuineness of their belief. Joe's ears grew scarlet. "I haven't done anything," he mumbled. "Opportunity just came my way, that's all."

"Exactly!" said Mr. Mayhew. "Opportunity came your way, but there are few boys who would have had the courage to have seized opportunity as you have done, who would have been brave enough to face the things opportunity put before you, as you have faced them, who'd have been willing, and ready, to sacrifice himself for others' good on every occasion. There are not many boys in America who have done what you have done for their country. Knowledge of that is your reward, my boy. There is none finer. I tell you," he said, "the Wolf Patrol has reason to be proud of Joe Lowell."

"We are."

"We always have been."

"We always will be."

"There's only one Joe!"



The boy tried to hide his embarrassment, but his heart was thumping fast. The words of the old boss were the greatest reward any boy could have. He knew he had done his best. Yet, even now, he did not realize how fine that best had been.

Mr. Mayhew rose slowly to his feet. "When I told you about those boys and their Liberty Bonds," he went on, "I didn't tell you all the story. Already five hundred dollars' worth of the bonds stand in Joe's and Harvey's name. Here is the other five hundred." He offered an envelope to the startled leader. "They're yours, my boys. You've kept your part of the bargain well. Wait," he commanded sharply, holding up his hand to check another outburst, "I've had a letter from my son, Stephen, and he does not agree with my plan for the camp which this money was to start."

A sharp-drawn "Oh!" escaped from Fat Foster's wide-open mouth. That Mr. Steve should go back on the Wolves was more than any of them could credit.

"He does not agree with me at all," repeated the



old boss. "He says that my plan is wrong; that naming the camp for him is absurd. He will not listen to such a thing. He says he has done nothing to deserve it. He says, further, that a thousand dollars would start only a poor sort of camp for the Wolves. Stephen is right. He is always right."

He stopped and, once more, glanced about at the disappointed faces. "I cannot reward you for what you have done," he said, with a gentleness that added to their astonishment. "I would not try to, if I could. Your consciences are your best rewards. But this I have done. There is a lake ten miles back in the hills which I own. I think you've been there with Stephen. You're to go there to-morrow, pick out a site for a camp, have that camp built as you want it, equip it with all you need and send the bills to me. That camp will be the property of the Wolf Patrol."

There was silence for a second — utter, dumb silence. Then the eight surged to their feet and swarmed about the old boss.



"Yell, if you want to," laughed Mr. Nelson.  
"I'm certainly going to."

They did. Mrs. Nelson came to the doorway to see what it was all about. They told her at the top of their lungs. She, too, clapped her hands. Only the old boss was silent. They would not let him speak.

"Gee!" gurgled Fat, dancing around the room with Nelse. "Gee, but I'd like to kiss the old chap! Wow! Wow!"

"Just a minute." Mr. Mayhew's voice rose above the din like the rumble of the machinery in his plant. "Just a moment, please."

They subsided as well as they could, but stood hugging themselves in their joy. "Like most things of this sort," the old gentleman went on, "there's a condition to the gift. Both Stephen and I insist on the privilege of naming the camp."

"Of course you can."

"Rather!"

"Sure thing!"

"It's going to be Camp Mayhew," laughed Joe.



"In spite of all you can say, it's going to be Camp John Mayhew."

"Yes! Yes! Camp John Mayhew!"

"No!" The old gray head shook firmly. "Boys," he said, "Mr. and Mrs. Nelson have let us make a deal of noise this evening; perhaps they will let us make a little more."

"The house is yours. Go as far as you like," encouraged Mr. Nelson.

"I'm having as good a time as you are, Mr. Mayhew," retorted the little woman.

"Then it's a very good time," stated the old gentleman, with a bow. "I'd like to hear a real cheer," he said, turning to the Wolves, "and I'd like to propose that cheer."

"We're ready."

"We'll yell our heads off!"

"All right. Now! One, two, three. Three cheers for Camp Joe Lowell!"

THE END







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